NOVEMBER 1996 · VOLUME 3 · NO. 3

inks

CARTOON AND COMIC ART STUDIES

I PROMISE to HONOR the COMIC PAGES AS FAMILY PAGES AND to KEEP THEM SAFE, to the BEST OF MY ABILITY, FROM WORDLY INFLUENCES. I WILL ESCHEW MENTION OF SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL, ESPECIALLY FAVORABLE MENTION.
nicole hollander

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letters

Regarding Thomas Inge's article in the May 1996 issue of *Inks* . . . Was Krazy Kat black? Sure it was. George Herriman always drew it that way: a black cat. Was Herriman African American? The New Orleans Board of Health not withstanding, I seriously doubt it. To say he went through life "passing for white" seems ludicrous to anyone who knew him.

I had the chance to know George for a brief time in the mid-1930s. He would often drop in at the art department of the *Los Angeles Herald-Express*, and I visited him at his home in Hollywood as well. Granted mine are observations through the eyes of an awe-struck eighteen- or nineteen-year-old, but I never saw any indication in pigmentation, facial structure or speech inflection that indicated anything Negroid about George Herriman.

My boss in the art department was Ralph "Pinky" Springer. He and George started out together in the early 1900s as sports and staff cartoonists on the *Los Angeles Examiner*. They and their families were intimate friends for almost forty years. Anyone who knew Pinky will agree he was a thoroughly bigoted racist if there ever was one. To think George could have fooled him all those years boggles the mind.

The article cites anecdotal evidence that Herriman always wore a hat to hide his kinky hair. Not so. I once asked Pinky why George consistently wore his hat indoors and out. The answer? Herriman had a growth on the back of his skull. He referred to it as a "wen" and was embarrassed to expose it in public.

Herriman's nickname of "the Greek" was not an effort to hide his black identity. It was given to him by Tad Dorgan when they worked together in New York because George was so handsome.

I have checked these recollections with John P. Maloney, the only other survivor of that talented *Herald* art staff of the thirties, and he concurs completely. He also knew Herriman and the slant of the *Inks* article disturbs him. The thing that concerns me most about Dr. Inge's piece is his use of obscure examples of Herriman's art to justify his premise. The use of outrageous ethnic stereotypes was common practice in those days. Look at some of the stuff Zim [Eugene Zimmerman] did in that same period. The stereotypes were meant in good humor, not gratuitous racism, and certainly did not represent Herriman's troubled psyche, if he had one. From all I ever heard, he was a considerate, generous individual.

I fail to see why George Herriman's ethnicity should even be an issue. White, black, green or purple, he was a genius—cartooning's colossus—who is the inspiration and idol even today of any cartoonist who seriously understands and respects the demands of our art. Would that tomorrow's cartoonists should inherit such mixed blood lines, whatever color they might be.

Karl Hubenthal

Editors note: Karl Hubenthal drew sports and editorial cartoons for forty-seven years, first for the Los Angeles Herald *and later for the* Los Angeles Examiner.

For a volume on Yiddish/Jewish influence in popular culture, I am seeking information on Jewish cartoonists including Richard Briefer, Lou Fine, Sheldon Mayer, and others. I am also interested in locating published works on Jewish themes in comics.

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editorial

Inks: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies has reached the last of the nine issues intended by its editorial board and the board of Ohio State University Press to serve as a pilot project to test scholarly productivity in the field and the level of subscriber interest in such a publication. We are grateful for the generous donation by Jean and Charles Schulz that supported all nine issues and to the Ohio Joint Program in the Arts and Humanities for their assistance with six issues. Thanks also must go to members of the editorial board of *Inks: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies* who have been generous with their time and thoughtful in their work.

A decision has been made to continue the journal in 1997 through volume 4. If it is to survive beyond that, subscriptions, especially in libraries, must increase. Readers are invited to assist with the next stage of *Inks*' development by renewing their subscriptions and encouraging others to purchase the journal. The editorial in our inaugural issue stated that *Inks*' purpose was "to advance knowledge about cartooning through the publication of scholarly works dealing with all genres of print cartooning," with the added condition that articles must be "lively." We believe this goal has been met. The challenge now is for the journal to achieve financial stability.

Lucy Shelton Caswell
Editor

Drawing the Line:

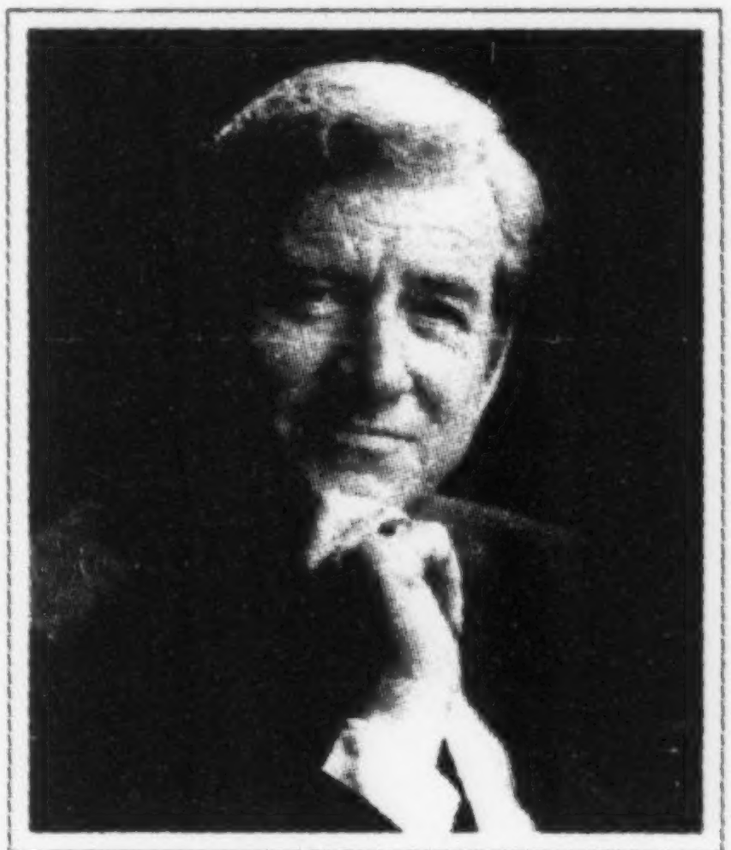
An Absolute Defense for Political Cartoons

BY CHRISTOPHER LAMB

For the first time, in *Hustler Magazine v. Jerry Falwell* in 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court made the history of political cartooning central to a decision.[1] While ruling on a magazine parody, the Court said that caricature could not be actionable unless it contained a false statement of fact that was made with actual malice: "Were we to hold otherwise, there can be little doubt that political cartoonists and satirists would be subjected to damages without any showing that their work falsely defamed their subject."[2]

Hustler dealt with an advertisement parody, not with a political cartoon. The two are not synonymous, and the distinction is important. While *Hustler* (and other First Amendment cases) would indeed influence the Supreme Court's decision in any case involving a political cartoon, it does not guarantee the same result. Although state courts have determined that cartoonists have considerable freedom to satirize people and issues, this, too, does not guarantee that

Jerry Falwell talks about his first time.*



FALWELL: My first time was in an outhouse outside Lynchburg, Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't it a little cramped?

FALWELL: Not after I kicked the goat out.

INTERVIEWER: I see. You must tell me all about it.

FALWELL: I never *really* expected to make it with Mom, but then after she showed all the other guys in town such a good time, I figured, "What the hell!"

INTERVIEWER: But your mom? Isn't that a bit odd?

FALWELL: I don't think so. Looks don't mean that much to me in a woman.

INTERVIEWER: Go on.

FALWELL: Well, we were drunk off our God-fearing asses on Campari, ginger ale and soda—that's called a Fire and Brimstone—at the time. And Mom looked better than a Baptist whore with a $100 donation.

INTERVIEWER: Campari in the crapper with Mom . . . how interesting. Well, how was it?

FALWELL: The Campari was great, but Mom passed out before I could come.

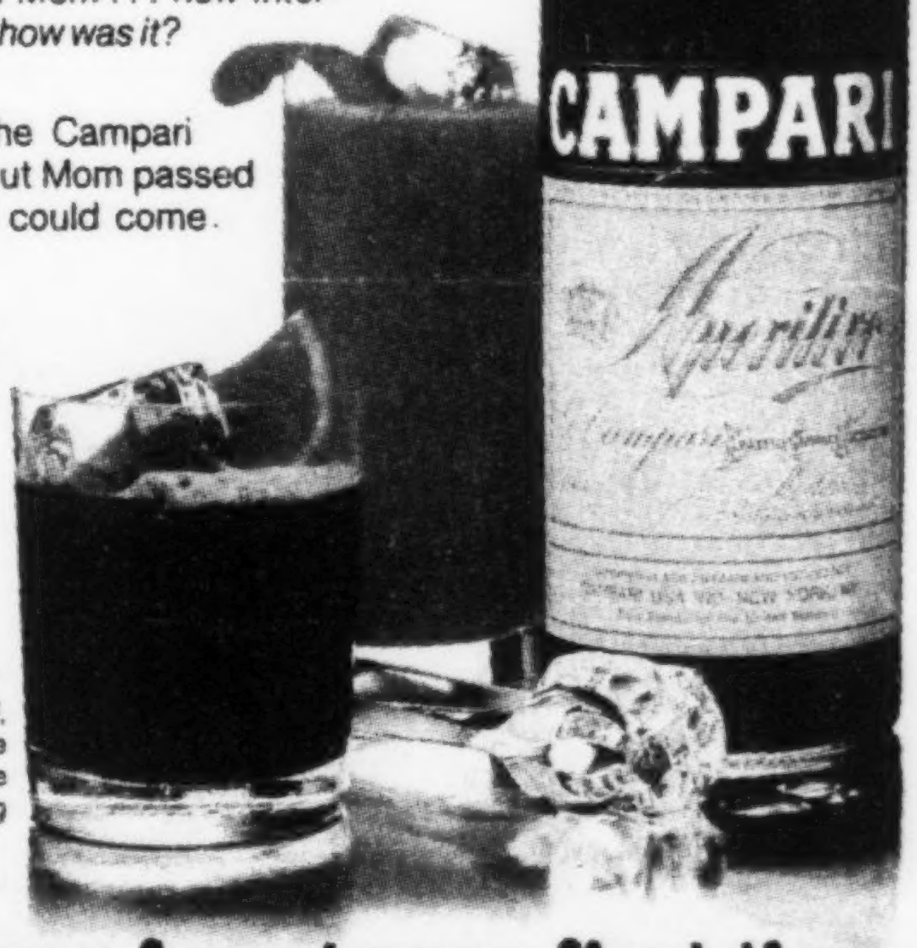
INTERVIEWER: Did you ever try it again?

FALWELL: Sure . . .

lots of times. But not in the outhouse. Between Mom and the shit, the flies were too much to bear.

INTERVIEWER: We meant the Campari.

FALWELL: Oh, yeah. I always get sloshed before I go out to the pulpit. You don't think I could lay down all that bullshit *sober*, do you?



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*AD PARODY—NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Inside front cover of *Hustler*, November 1982

the Supreme Court will automatically reach the same conclusion. Lower courts must defer to the Supreme Court, not vice versa. Without direct precedent, one cannot presuppose any decision by the Supreme Court, and, since 1907, the Court has not decided on the matter of the constitutional freedom of cartoonists.

While not ruling directly on a cartoon, the Court has, nevertheless, fashioned a formidable defense for the cartoonist. The Court has consistently maintained that criticism of public affairs—or political speech—be protected under the First Amendment. Additionally, the Court has emphasized that opinion and rhetorical hyperbole are generally considered protected expression. When a statement of "opinion" on a matter of public concern reasonably implies false and defamatory facts regarding public figures or private figures, the plaintiff in a libel suit must prove the statement was made with "actual malice," or knowledge of the falsity or reckless disregard for the truth.[3] For a political cartoonist, however, one newspaper editor said: "That's not a definition of libel; that's a job description. That's what they're supposed to do."[4]

This article argues that political cartoons, as political speech, should be accorded the highest level of First Amendment protection and outlines a legal framework for the protection of political cartoons in this country. Prominent First Amendment decisions by the Supreme Court, such as *New York Times v. Sullivan and Hustler v. Falwell*, are reviewed, then the evolution of lawsuits against cartoonists is described and the reliance of lower courts on Supreme Court decisions is discussed. The standard expressed here allows cartoonists to contribute to the dialogue of ideas free of the threat of a lawsuit. It does not, however, apply to drawings about private figures not involved in matters of public concern.

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court constitutionalized the libel standard. In *New York Times v. Sullivan*, the Court held a public official could not recover damages in a libel action brought against a critic of his official conduct unless it could be proved, by clear and convincing evidence, "that the statement was made with 'actual malice'—that is, with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not." The Court said it thought this standard would avoid self-censorship by the press.[5] Writing the opinion in *New York Times*, William Brennan said that our tradition of free press meant there should be a commitment to robust speech and that this might include caustic and free attacks on public officials.[6]

In *Gertz v. Robert Welch* in 1974, the Court defined public figures as either people of widespread fame or people who have injected themselves into the debate of a public issue for the purpose of affecting its outcome. Private people, on the other hand, have fewer opportunities to counter false statements and therefore needed greater protection from the law.[7] The Court also said opinion was protected expression: "Under the First Amendment there is no such thing as a false idea. However, pernicious an opinion may seem, we depend for its correction not on the conscious of judges and juries but on the competition of other ideas."[8]

In *Old Dominion Branch No. 496, National Association of Letter Carriers v. Austin*, which was decided the same day as Gertz, the Court said the use of the word "blackmail" was protected expression because "even the most careless reader must have perceived that the word was no more than rhetorical hyperbole."[9] The Court, in *Greenbelt Publishing Association v. Bresler*, had earlier recognized that "rhetorical hyperbole," or that which is exaggerated beyond belief, is protected expression and must be considered within its context.[10]

While pure opinion is protected expression, the courts have not permitted the same freedom to "mixed" opinion. *The Restatement (Second) of Torts* defined pure opinion as that which is simply expressed and based on disclosed or assumed nondefamatory facts. Mixed opinion, on the other hand, is defined as those opinions apparently based on facts regarding the plaintiff or their conduct that have not been stated by the defendant or assumed to exist by the parties to the communication.[11]

The Supreme Court expanded First Amendment protection in *Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc. v. Hepps*, where it held that a plaintiff who is a private figure must prove the falsity of a defamatory statement in a matter of public concern.[12] To provide "breathing space" for true speech on matters of public concern, the Court said it was necessary to insulate even demonstrably false speech from liability.[13]

In *Milkovich v. Lorain Journal*, the Court rejected the dicta in Gertz that provided absolute protection to opinion. It suggested that editorials, columns, and other expressions of opinion should not be constitutionally protected if they are based on information that is either incorrect or incomplete. The Court emphasized that it would protect statements about public concern that cannot be proven false. While opinions with provably false assertions are not protected, that which is clearly satirical, hyperbolic, or rhetorical is.[14]

For purposes of a defense for cartoonists, the most important case is *Hustler v. Falwell*. *Hustler*

"I've got to go now. . . . I've been appointed Secretary of Defense and the Secret Service men are here!"

"I've Got to Go Now," Paul Conrad, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 1968

magazine published a parody of a Campari advertisement, where celebrities talk about the first time they drank Campari wine. In the magazine parody, Reverend Jerry Falwell said his "first time" involved not only Campari, but also included his first sexual experience, which involved incest with his mother in an outhouse. Falwell sued *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt and the magazine for invasion of privacy, libel, and the intentional infliction of emotional distress. The trial court granted summary judgment for Flynt on the issue of invasion of privacy. The jury, applying the *New York Times* standard, found that there was no libel because the parody "could not reasonably be understood as describing actual facts." However, the jury found that publication of the parody constituted intentional and reckless misconduct, and awarded Falwell $200,000 in damages. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the verdict.[15]

The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously overruled the appeals court. The Court said the state's interest in protecting public figures from emotional distress was not sufficient to deny First Amendment protection that is intended to inflict emotional injury when that speech could not reasonably have been interpreted as stating actual facts about the public involved. The Court said Falwell could not collect damages because the ad parody could not be believed.[16] In *Hustler*, the Supreme Court took pains to emphasize that it was dealing with what it termed "political speech," which is entitled to the highest degree of protection under the First Amendment. Moreover, the Court said it was deciding the issues on the facts of the case, which dealt with a "public figure" claiming injury from political speech, not a company, such as Campari, claiming the parody was a copyright infringement.[17]

In recent years, however, the Supreme Court has clarified the difference between what is copyrighted material and what is fair use of that copyright. For instance, the Court said that a rap group's graphic parody of the song, "Oh, Pretty Woman," was a fair use of copyright, and thus protected expression. In *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music, Inc.*, 2 Live Crew recorded "Pretty Woman" to satirize the original work. In *Campbell*, the Court held that 2 Live Crew's parody was fair use even though it was of a commercial nature. It said that 2 Live Crew took the heart of the original song and created a distinctive new song that was not excessive in light of the song's parodic purpose. If a work targets another for humorous or ironic effect, it is by definition a new work.[18] Well-known products are highly attractive subjects for parodists, who engage in social or humorous commentary, often using common trademarks as the object of their work. For a parody of a trademark to be effective requires it be a well-known trademark.[19] The doctrine of fair use gives protection to the parodist. While "noncommercial" parody receives full First Amendment protection, "commercial" parody does not. If a commercial parody targets a work for creating an effect that is humorous or ironic, the parody is considered an entirely new work, and thus receives full protection. Finally, parodies that involve political commentary or matters of public concern also are afforded con-

siderable protection. This applies directly to political cartoons.

In 1808, English chief justice Lord Ellenborough pronounced the doctrine of fair comment, which protected pure opinion and comment on public affairs.[20] Fair comment helped cartooning to thrive in the second half of the nineteenth century in magazines such as *Harper's Weekly* and comic weeklies such as *Puck* and *Judge*.[21] Their impact was so powerful that newspapers hired popular cartoonists during circulation wars.[22] Politicians tried to stifle the cartoonists with legislation.[23] Between 1895 and 1915, five states, New York, California, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Alabama, considered anti-cartoon legislation. When New York City political boss Thomas Platt presented an anti-cartoon bill in the Legislature, cartoonist Homer Davenport compared him with the ignominious "Boss" Tweed in the *New York Journal and Advertiser*. The bill was summarily killed.[24] Similar bills also were killed in Indiana and Alabama. California and Pennsylvania passed laws restricting the expression of cartoons, but neither achieved their intent.[25]

In 1907, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled directly on a political cartoon for the only time in U.S. history. The Court in *Patterson v. Colorado* affirmed the contempt conviction of a newspaper editor for publishing editorials and a cartoon in his newspaper that impugned the reputations of judges on the Colorado State Supreme Court.[26] The cartoon was called "Lord High Executioner" and portrayed the chief justice beheading some public officials. Another cartoon, "The Great Judicial Slaughter-House and Mausoleum," implied that justices were controlled by political bosses.[27] The following year, President Theodore Roosevelt urged that the editors of the *Indianapolis News* be indicted for criminal libel for publishing editorials and cartoons that said that influential Americans profited from the building of the Panama Canal.[28] The charges were dismissed when a federal judge in Indiana refused to extradite the editors to Washington, D.C.[29]

In 1911, a cartoon, "City Farm," which implied that a Massachusetts mayor was hostile toward the conditions of the poor, was found to be "plainly defamatory."[30] The cartoon showed emaciated inmates being brought a tray with a little bit of food and a teapot. The tray was labeled, "Poor Food," "Rancid Butter," and "Shadow Tea." It was accompanied by a statement that a mayor had closed a charity board and replaced it with another that was hostile to the needs of the poor. The drawing urged voters to vote against him in the next day's election in the name of "humanity." The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court said that the cartoon held the mayor "up to ridicule and contempt" and harmed his reputation.

During World War I, cartoons in the socialist magazine, *The Masses*, were considered seditious and prohibited from the mails under the Espionage Act.[31] Judge Learned Hand agreed with the magazine. In a decision that foreshadowed the development of greater civil liberties in this country, he said: "To (equate) agitation, legitimate as such, with direct incitement to violent resistance, is to disregard the intolerance of all methods of political agitation which in normal times is a safeguard of free government.[32] Judge Hand's decision, however, was overturned on appeal.[33]

Two cartoonists on *The Masses* were among those personally indicted under the Espionage Act but were ultimately freed after two hung juries. The offending cartoons included a drawing by Henry Glintenkamp of a skeleton measuring an Army recruit, and one by Art Young called "Having Their Fling," which showed an editor, capitalist, politician, and minister in a war dance being led by the devil. Two German-American cartoonists, who criticized U.S. participation in the war, were arrested and charged as spies in early 1918.[34]

Cartoonists found little consistency in the courtroom during the next several decades. In 1921, the *Los Angeles Record* published a cartoon depicting the city's police chief holding a halo over his head with one hand and taking a bribe with the other. The California Supreme Court ruled that while the cartoon obviously accused the police chief of accepting bribes, it was still protected expression.[35]

When a meeting between Boston Mayor James Curley and *Boston Telegraph* publisher Frederick W. Enright in 1926 resulted in a fist fight, Enright published a cartoon showing Curley in prison garb behind bars with the caption, "Sober Up, Jim." Though Curley had once served a prison term for taking a civil service examination for a friend, Enright was prosecuted for criminal libel because it was proven that Curley and Enright had a fight prior to the publication of the cartoon and thus the cartoon was published out of ill will.[36] In a 1936 case, *Doherty v. Kansas City Star*, the Kansas Supreme Court held that a cartoon that implied that the plaintiff charged exorbitant gas rates was capable of defamatory meaning.[37]

The Supreme Court began its process of creating a more unified and coherent libel law in 1964. Since *New York Times v. Sullivan*, the Court has provided a wide latitude of freedom when criticizing the conduct of public officials. In *Greenbelt Cooperative Publishing Association v. Bresler and National Association of Letter Carriers v. Austin*, the

Court said rhetorical hyperbole, or an exaggerated statement for effect, was protected expression. Political cartoons are by their nature, opinions, or "rhetorical hyperbole," in other words, an artist's satiric interpretation of a news story.

The "rhetorical hyperbole" defense has regularly been applied to political cartoons. A California court first applied the "rhetorical hyperbole" protection to a political cartoon in *Yorty v. Chandler*. After Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty expressed an interest in the position of Secretary of Defense in President-elect Richard Nixon's cabinet, *Los Angeles Times* cartoonist Paul Conrad drew Yorty talking on the phone, saying, "I've got to go now . . . I've been appointed Secretary of Defense and the Secret Service men are here!" while four orderlies prepared to slip a straightjacket on him (see page 5). Yorty argued that the cartoon said he was suffering from insanity and should be placed in a straightjacket. The court, however, said that even the most careless reader would perceive the cartoon as "no more than rhetorical hyperbole."[38] In *Yorty*, the court said:

> A political cartoon which falsely depicts a public officials selling franchises for personal gain, or a judge taking a bribe, or an attorney altering a public record, or a police officer shooting a defenseless prisoner, will not be exempt from redress under the laws because the charge is depicted graphically in linear form rather than vertically in written statement. . . . On the other hand, a cartoon which depicts a fanciful, allegorical, anthromorphical, or zoomorphical sense will not be considered libelous because it depicts a public person as a flower, a block of wood, a fallen angel, or an animal.[39]

The *Yorty* court did, however, indicate a cartoon could be libelous if it could reasonably be interpreted as an accusation of criminal activity.[40] This is, however, problematic: satire is not literal truth but rhetoric. If a cartoon is considered opinion by the trial court judge, the case will be dropped; but the question of whether or not an artist knew what he drew was false is a decision for a jury.[41]

Other courts have since applied the "rhetorical hyperbole" defense in ruling that cartoons are protected expression. In *Keller v. Miami Herald*, for instance, a Florida court ruled that a cartoon was "pure opinion." The plaintiff sued the *Miami Herald* over a cartoon (pictured at left) that exaggerated the conditions of a nursing home, which was closed by the state and its proprietors were investigated for criminal misconduct. The nursing home was identified in the cartoon with a condemnation notice. Also included were three men depicted as gangsters, each carrying a sack with a dollar sign on it, and one of the men was saying, "Don't worry, boss, we can always re-open it as a haunted house for the kiddies." The court, in granting a summary judg-

"Don't Worry, Boss, We Can Always Reopen It as a Haunted House," Jim Morin, *Miami Herald*, 29 October 1980

"Eau de Cover-up," Bob Englehart, *Dayton Journal-Herald,* 13 March 1979

ment for the defendant, said that the facts surrounding the case "had been well-publicized so that the newspaper's readers were aware of the series of events upon which the cartoonist based his opinion."[42]

William Loeb, the late publisher of the *Manchester Union Leader*, sued the B*oston Globe* over a cartoon called, "The Thoughts of Chairman Loeb," which pictured the publisher, eyes askew with a cuckoo springing from his forehead. While the cartoon was obviously literally incorrect, the court decided it was "an opinion and not a diagnosis."[43] A Massachusetts court used the same rationale in *King v. Globe Newspaper Co.* It said a cartoon depicting the state's governor dressed in gangster attire while being handcuffed to a police officer, who was reading a list of the governor's controversial political appointments to a desk sergeant, could not reasonably be interpreted as saying the governor was criminal or unethical.[44]

Other political cartoons have been similarly protected. An Ohio county administrator sued the Dayton, Ohio, newspapers over a series of news stories, editorials, and cartoons (see above) that depicted her as a liar, skunk, rat, and witch, but the court found it protected expression, regardless of their viciousness.[45] In *Palm Beach Newspapers, Inc. v. Early*, a Florida appellate court called a cartoon mean-spirited, but said it was "rhetorical hyperbole" and thus protected expression.[46] In *Russell v. McMillan*, a court ruled that a cartoon was "clearly a symbolic expression of the opinion espoused in the accompanying article and editorial."[47] *Restatement of Torts* said that if all a cartoon does "is to express a harsh judgment upon known or assumed facts, there is no more than an expression of opinion of the pure type."[48]

In granting summary judgment for a newspaper that published a cartoon critical of a ski resort, a Vermont court said the drawing expressed a harsh judgment upon known or assumed facts, and was thus protected.[49] The cartoon satirized a ski resort that wanted to make snow using sewer waste (see page 9). The state Supreme Court of Oklahoma said a cartoon was not libelous in *Miskovsky v. Oklahoma Publishing Co.* The *Oklahoma City Times* published a cartoon that inferred that a candidate for the U.S. Senate influenced another man to ask his opponent if he were a homosexual during a press conference (see page 10). The court said that the newspaper did not know that the cartoon was false.[50]

While courts have said that cartoons that imply defamatory facts were not protected, they have been reluctant to punish cartoons that do just that. In *La Rocca v. New York News*, the court said that should there be a minor mistake of fact in an allegedly libelous cartoon, a court may still grant a summary judgment in favor of the cartoon. In *La Rocca*, two

policemen sued a newspaper for libel, alleging that an article, editorial, and cartoon defamed them. The police officers arrested a teacher for assault and escorted him from the school. In a cartoon the next day, the officers, who were drawn wearing dunce caps, were shown handcuffing the teacher in the classroom. The arrest did not occur in the classroom, yet the court said the mistake was minor and unrelated to the gist of the alleged libel.[51]

But in *Buller v. Pulitzer Publishing Company*, a cartoon, which was based on an article, portrayed a psychic as lacking integrity. The Missouri Court of Appeals determined that the article and cartoon that injured the reputation of the psychic, a private figure, were libelous per se. The court said that if the psychic's business were a matter of public concern, there would be no libel.[52] There is an important distinction between *Buller* and other suits against cartoonists. It involved a private figure, not a public figure or public official, who was not involved in a matter of public concern.

Despite repeated assurances from the courts that cartoons are protected expression, lawsuits against cartoonists proliferated during the 1980s.[53] As lawsuits increased, so did the cost of defending them. Libel suits do not have to be effective in court to chill expression. Factors such as the high cost of both libel insurance and litigation can be a greater deterrent for cartoonists than a jury verdict.[54]

While *Hustler v. Falwell* did not directly concern a political cartoon, but rather a magazine parody, the decision had ramifications for cartoonists. If "the emotional distress" claim had been accepted by the Supreme Court, it would have been "tantamount to the end of commentary in this country," one cartoonist said.[55] In an *amici curiae* brief to the Supreme Court, the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists said that political satire was uniquely vulnerable to this tort "because satire's instrument is the direct, often crude and tasteless, ad hominem attack." The Court said that the *Hustler* caricature was at best a distant cousin to the political

"Uh-Oh—Looks Like the Snow-Making Machines are Clogged Again,"
Tim Newcomb, *Barre-Montpelier Times-Argus*, 4 April 1985

cartoon, that if it were possible to separate one from the other, public discourse would not suffer by penalizing Flynt, "but we doubt that there is any such standard." In rejecting the tort of intentional infliction of emotional distress, the Court said that a contrary decision would subject political cartoonists and satirists to damages without showing that their work falsely defamed their subject.[56] *Hustler* affirmed the freedom of cartoonists and must be credited, in some part, with ending the trend of lawsuits against cartoonists.[57]

Another issue that may eventually have to be addressed is the protection that cartoonists have when dealing with copyrights and registered trademarks. The fact pattern in *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose* differs from that of a political cartoon that may spoof the presidents's health-care reform package by using a parody of a slogan used by an aspirin manufacturer. In *Campbell*, the Court dealt with a commercial parody, which has partial First Amendment protection in matters of copyright infringement, while noncommercial parody has full First Amendment protection in matters of copyright infringement. A political cartoon is noncommercial speech and should have First Amendment protection. It also has been argued that companies that promote their trademarks widely can be analogized to public figures in a defamation case. By the nature of their activities, the owners of such trademarks have injected themselves into the public eye and should not therefore complain if their efforts are so successful that a parody of their protect is well understood by the public.[58]

It is doubtful that any type of political cartooning about public officials, public figures, or genuine matters of public concern lacks constitutional protection under the First Amendment, given decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court over the last thirty years. This standard allows cartoonists to contribute to the dialogue of ideas free of nuisance lawsuits, which may be brought merely to intimidate the cartoonist and his or her newspaper from publishing further drawings, and thus infringe on the value of dialogue regarding matters of social concern.

In *Hustler*, the Supreme Court took pains to emphasize that it was dealing with what is termed "political speech," which is entitled to the highest degree of protection under the First Amendment.[59] Political cartoons, by their nature, deal with controversial issues on sensitive topics and involve public officials and public figures. They criticize the conduct of politicians and other public officials, and therefore are accorded broad protection under the *New York Times'* standard, which requires "actual malice," or that a statement is intentionally false.[60]

But proving that cartoons contain factual statements that are false is a formidable task.[61] A political cartoon—like any satire—misrepresents facts. All satire involves a departure from literal truth, a reliance on what might be called "satiric fiction."[62] Unlike a photograph, which is a literal representation of an actual event, a political cartoon exaggerates an actual event by using hyperbole. Cartoons appear in a setting that make it obvious that they are intended to be humorous, fantastic, or allegor-

"Isn't That Right, Anthony?"
Chan Lowe, *Oklahoma City Times*,
11 August 1978

ical, and that they should not be taken literally, and thus cannot be considered libelous because they are "rhetorical hyperbole," and this, according to the Supreme Court, protected expression.[63]

NOTES:

1. Robert Spellman, "Pricking the Mighty: The Law and Editorial Cartooning," *Communications and the Law* 10 (December 1988): 44.

2. *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 51 (1986).

3. *Milkovich v. Lorain Journal*, 497 U.S. 19 (1992).

4. Chris Lamb, "With Malicious Intent," *Target: The Political Cartoon Quarterly* 17 (August 1985): 15.

5. *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 279-280 (1964).

6. *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 270.

7. *Gertz v. Robert Welch*, 418 U.S. 346-50 (1974).

8. *Gertz v. Robert Welch*, 339-340.

9. *Old Dominion Branch No. 496, National Association of Letter Carriers v. Austin*, 418 U.S. 264 (1974).

10. *Greenbelt Publishing Association v. Bresler*, 398 U.S. 6 (1970).

11. *Restatement of the Law of Torts*, 2d. ed. (St. Paul: St. Paul American Law Institute, 1977), 566.

12. *Hepps v. Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc.*, 475 U.S. 767 (1986).

13. *Hepps v. Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc.*, 794.

14. *Milkovich, supra* note 3, at 1, 19.

15. *Hustler, supra* note 2, at 46.

16. *Hustler, supra* note 2, at 46.

17. David Welkowitz, "Trademark Parody After Hustler Magazine v. Falwell," *Communications and the Law* 11 (December 1989): 69.

18. *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music, Inc.*, 127 L. Ed 2d 500, 524, 525.

19. Welkowitz, 72.

20. Spellman, 46.

21. Spellman, 46.

22. Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1968), 100.

23. Richard Samuel West, "Cartoonists and the Law," *Target: The Political Cartoon Quarterly* 17 (Autumn 1985): 17.

24. Hess and Kaplan, 25.

25. See Statutes of California, 1899, Chapter XXIX, and Laws of Pennsylvania, Session of 1903, 353.

26. *Patterson v. Colorado*, 205 U.S. 454 (1907).

27. *Patterson v. Colorado*, 463.

28. Spellman, 48.

29. *United States v. Smith*, 173 Fed. 227 (D.Ind. 1909).

30. *Brown v. Harrington*, 208 Mass. 600, 95 N.E. (1911).

31. Title XII of the Espionage Act forbade mailing any matter violating the Act, or advocating treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to any law of the United States. See The Espionage Act, Stat. 217 (1917).

32. *Masses Publishing Company v. Patten*, 244 Fed. 535 (S.D.N.Y. 1917).

33. *Masses Publishing Company v. Patten*, 246 Fed. 26 (S.D.N.Y. 1917).

34. "Two Cartoonists Jailed as Spies," *Cartoons Magazine*, February 1918, 288.

35. *Snively v. Record*, 185 Cal. 565 (1921)

36. Robert Phelps, *Libel: Rights, Risks, and Responsibilities* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 108.

37. *Doherty v. Kansas City Star*, 144 Kan. 206, 59 P2d 30 (1936).

38. *Yorty v. Chandler*, 13 Cal. App. 3d 467 (1970).

39. *Yorty v. Chandler*, 472.

40. *Yorty v. Chandler*, 472.

41. Spellman, 53.

42. *Keller v. Miami Herald Publishing Co.*, 778 F2d 711 (11th Cir. 1985).

43. *Loeb v. Globe Newspaper Co.*, 489 Fed. 481 (D.Mass. 1980).

44. *King v. Globe Newspaper Co.*, 512 2d 241 (Mass. 1987).

45. *Ferguson v. Dayton Newspapers*, 7 Med. L. Rptr. 2506 (Ohio App. 1981).

46. *Palm Beach Newspapers, Inc.*, v. Early, 334 So.2d 50 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 1976).

47. *Russell v. McMillan*, 685 P2d 259 (Colo. Ct. App. 1984).

48. *Restatement*, 556.

49. *Killington Ltd. v. Times Argus*, 14 Med. L. Rptr., 1316.

50. *Miskovsky v. Tulsa Tribune Co.*, 678 P2d 242 (Okla. 1983).

51. *La Rocca v. New York News*, 383 A2d 451 (1978).

52. *Buller v. Pulitzer Publishing Co.*, 684 S.W. 2d 473 (1984).

53. Rosalyn Maser, an attorney who represents several cartoonists, recorded nineteen suits that advanced in state and federal courts in the years between 1981 and 1987. See George Garneau, "Libel Panel," *Editor and Publisher*, 13 February 1988, 28.

54. Kramer, 474.

55. Lamb, 15.

56. *Hustler, supra* note 2, at 51-52.

57. *Media Law Reporter* reports no new lawsuits against cartoonists since *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell.*

58. Welkowitz, 72.

59. Welkowitz, 69.

60. *New York Times, supra* note 5, at 254.

61. Kramer, 607.

62. David Rosenheim, *Swift and the Satirist's Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 12.

63. *Milkovich*, supra note 3, at 19.

LYONEL FEININGER: A KINDER, GENTLER COMIC STRIP

BY ALAN FRIED

Comic strips and comic books have, from time to time, gotten a little too raucous, a little too violent and, at times, a little too bloody.[1] Lyonel Feininger was an idealist who believed that children deserve well-drawn cartoon adventures with high-minded ideals. Feininger's achievements as an artist are known to both art historians and to a wider audience of art lovers because he helped found the Bauhaus movement and his work bridged cubism and German expressionism. The cartoons that first brought him widespread attention are far less known, although he devoted the years from 1898 through 1907 to creating editorial cartoons and a pair of noteworthy comic strips. Feininger was one of the first cartoonists who deliberately worked to elevate the notion, themes and characterization of a comic strip for children. To understand the exceptional quality of Feininger's work, and to place it in context, it is necessary to recount briefly the familiar history of the comics and the critical resistance that the comics first met.

PART ELEVEN

The Chicago Sunday Tribune.

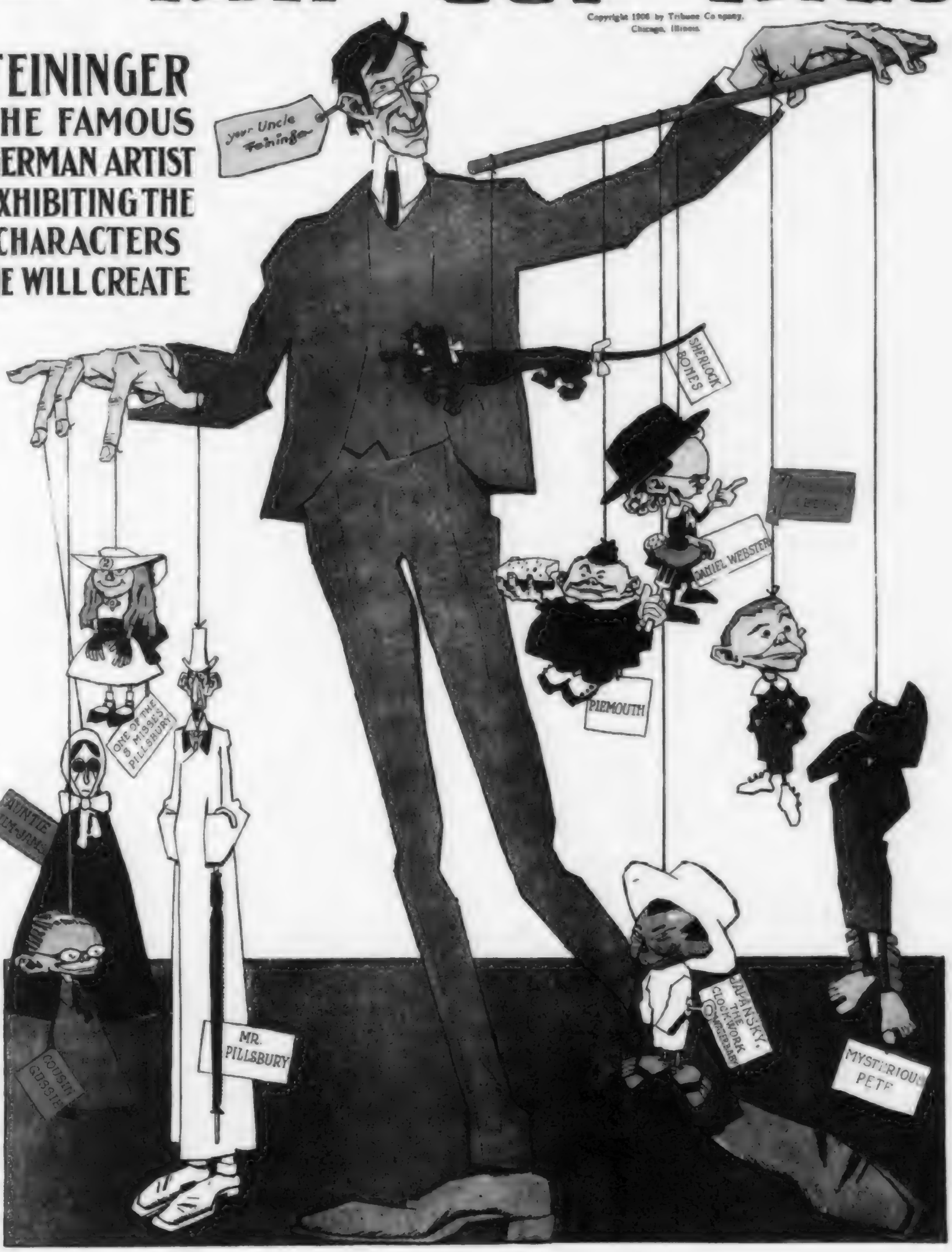
APRIL 29, 1906.

ALL ABOUT THE TRIBUNE'S NEW COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

The Kin-der-Kids

Copyright 1906 by Tribune Company, Chicago, Illinois.

FEININGER
THE FAMOUS GERMAN ARTIST EXHIBITING THE CHARACTERS HE WILL CREATE



In 1895, Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* created a phenomenon when it introduced Sunday supplements with color comic pages. Not to be outdone, William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* soon followed with its own supplement. These supplements were so successful, and they brought so many readers to newspapers, that they became a cultural institution. A dozen years later, one critic would write, "A newspaper without a colored press hardly considers itself a newspaper."[2]

The star of these early color comic supplements was, of course, the Yellow Kid, the creation of Richard Felton Outcault. Today, the Kid is popularly recognized as the first comic character because he established the importance of the comics to the commercial success of newspapers.[3] The Kid is also famous because he gave name to the form of sensational journalism that began at the turn of the century. In 1898, British journalist Margaret Banks explained the phenomenon for European readers and she described the character who became its namesake as "an imaginary personage who is horrible, grinning, toothless, long-eared infant robed in an orange-colored frock and a tilted high hat." Although she could not explain the popularity of the *New York World* Sunday supplements, she did acknowledge it, "Bushel baskets of them were carried to the towering dome of the *World* building and from there thrown out to the four winds of heaven which carried them into distant regions and the circulation increased enormously."[4] As popular as these supplements were with the general public, they were the bane of many devotees of highbrow culture. As will be seen later in this article, much of the criticism came from such magazines as the *Ladies Home Journal, The Printing Art, Outlook, Current Literature*, and *Atlantic Monthly*.[5]

The end of the last century was not a friendly period for children. In the 1890s, the United States was one of the few Western nations that still permitted child labor. Without a minimum wage or other relief, immigrants and other poor families were forced to send their children into the mines, the mills and the factories to work. Much as they are today, stories of child abuse were of particular concern to reformers. Such stories were not uncommon in the newly-sensationalized press. As early as 1897, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children saw the comic pages, with their garish representations of children, as particularly vulgar and harmful.[6]

Admittedly, the early strips often presented a world of manic agitation. As Blackbeard notes, "Following the popular vaudeville stage humor, the new comic strip humor was both vulgar and violent. Police nightsticks bounced off Happy Hooligan's head, tin-can hat or no tin-can hat, and dynamite planted by Hans and Fritz regularly blew the Captain and his cronies sky high."[7] Another popular concern of the time held that children and women were particularly susceptible to neurasthenia or nerve-disease. One reformer found the comic supplements as particularly unnerving:

> Physicians generally are convinced there is entirely too much stimulation of the nervous system of children in our present life . . . Ask any physician and he will tell you that the precocious child, much in contact with adults and given to [Sunday supplement] picture absorption is more subject to night terrors . . . The reason why night terrors are a little more frequent on Sunday and Monday nights . . . [is that] poring over the colored supplement of the Sunday supplement has been one of the absorbing occupations of the day of rest.[8]

Other critics were equally severe. Lindsay Swift wrote, "It is impossible to describe the vulgarity and

Illustration by Lyonel Feininger from Kenneth Bangs, "How Fritz Became A Wizard," *Harper's Young People* 15 (2 October 1894): 820-822.

insanity of their drawing and coloring," and questioned why newspaper editors would approve of such vulgarity and insanity. He closed his commentary by suggesting that comics "debauch the sensibilities and corrupt with wretched perversion."[9] The widely-popular *Ladies Home Journal* editorialized,

> Instead of helping to counteract the too-prevalent tendency among children to irreverence and resistance to authority, these pictures and jokes actually teach our children irreverence and lawlessness by making cheap fun of age, dignity, good breeding and all the pieties and amenities which make the family the most sacred and important of all institutions.[10]

Yet even The Ladies Home Journal did not think that the Sunday comics were past redemption. They noted the International Kindergarten Union, recognizing the low ideals of child and home life that these supplements spread over the country, recently [i.e., in 1905] proposed a concerted effort to secure a wholesome page in place of the present comic section and it urged families not to buy papers which issue comic supplements and to press upon editors the duty of securing good writers and illustrators of stories for children.[11]

If any newspaper would be prone to accept the idealistic appeal of the Kindergarten Union, it was the *Chicago Tribune*. From its inception in 1847, the *Tribune* had built a great reputation of personal accountability in journalism. From 1855 until his death in 1899, publisher Joseph Medill transformed the newspaper into a powerful voice for classic conservatism. He had helped found the Republican Party and created the boomlet that elected Lincoln, helped revive the city after the Great Chicago Fire, was elected Mayor of Chicago and helped to bring the 1892 Columbian Exposition to the city. While Medill made political and journalistic history, his daughters and their in-laws helped create an era of elegance in Chicago society. Medill's daughter Katherine was married to Robert Sanderson McCormick, the nephew of Cyrus Hall McCormick.[12] Robert McCormick would become ambassador to France, Russia and Austria. Katherine and Robert's son, Joseph Medill McCormick was editor-in-chief of the *Tribune*. As historian John Tebbels wrote, "The sons and daughters of the Medills and the McCormicks built their Chicago empire in the eighties and nineties and interpenetrated every aspect in the city's social and business life in the early decades of this century."[13]

Thus the *Tribune* might have been seen as one of the most likely newspapers to pioneer decency in comics. Nothing tawdry or vulgar would ever be printed for children in its pages, but the task of recruiting respectable children's illustrators fell to a most unlikely newspaper editor. James Keeley was a hard-driving newspaper man in the spirit of the *Front Page*.[14] Keeley was born and raised in England by a very severe mother. She forced his father out of the house because of his drinking. Keeley emigrated to the United States alone at the age of sixteen. He first lived in Leavenworth, Kansas (1883), and then moved to Chicago in 1889. He had been a newshawker in England and was a candy butcher on trains in the U. S.[15] He came to Chicago in 1889 and immediately landed a job at the *Tribune* as a night-police reporter. In 1893 Keeley was named assistant city editor; in 1898 he was named managing editor; and he became editor and general manager in 1909. His predecessor in the post, Will Van Benthuysen, went to Pulitzer's *New York World*. Keeley was barely thirty-one when he took the position.[16]

Keeley's rough manner was not all that unusual among newspapermen, since most newspaper editors of the time were just as unrefined and rough-edged as the majority of their readers. They instinctively understood what their readers enjoyed in features such as comic strips because they enjoyed it as well. They simply had no use for what they saw as pretty flights of fancy that were so popular in socially-approved children's literature. They liked seeing cartoon bricks hit cartoon heads, and so did the paper-reading public.

Keeley was not only unlikely because his tastes tended toward the plebeian but because he sought his artists in Europe. Keeley's biographer, James Weber Linn, describes the hard-bitten Chicago editor as knowing "little or nothing of international politics or European affairs," but he counted among his close friends Samuel Insull, head of Commonwealth Edison. Insull, a confidante of Robert W. Patterson (named President and Editor in Chief in 1890) and Medill McCormick (who briefly took over in 1910 when Patterson died), was a learned student of European affairs and undoubtedly tutored Keeley on the issues.[17] Despite Insull's best efforts, Keeley is remembered as a rough-hewn sort and thus it is particularly surprising that he was sent to Europe to find artists for the new *Tribune* supplement. Actually, it is more probable that Keeley's real quarry was Chicago bank president Paul Stensland who absconded to Tangier with the funds of the Milwaukee Avenue State Bank. In 1906, Keeley made his way to Paris where he met Lyonel Feininger and from there took the Sud Express to Tangier where he caught up with Stensland and arranged for his capture.[18] Whatever Keeley's true

Almost everything was anthropomorphized in *Wee Willie Winkie's World*.

travel intentions, he spent some of his time seeking cartoonists. He undoubtedly sought German cartoonists, in particular, for three very good reasons: a large part of the Chicago population was German; some of the most popular strips at the time were drawn by Germans; and German humor magazines were particularly popular and respected.[19]

One of the most popular strips at the time was the *Katzenjammer Kids* by Rudolph Dirks. Dirks began the strip at William Randolph Hearst's *Journal American* in 1897, where he was reportedly asked by editor Rudolph Block to create a strip that would compete with the Yellow Kid at Joseph Pulitzer's *World*. His strip was notable because it featured two of the roughest hooligans in comics. Although the *Katzenjammer Kids* was among the most popular of the *Journal American* cartoons, Dirks felt unappreciated by Hearst and tried to set up shop drawing the Katzenjammers for Pulitzer's *New York World*. Hearst successfully sued Pulitzer to prevent Dirks from taking the strip. The court ruled in 1914 that Hearst was allowed to publish the strip under its original title illustrated by Harold Knerr, while Dirks could produce the strip under the name *The Captain and the Kids* for the *World*.

Dirks' hooligans, Hans and Fritz, were based on *Max und Moritz*, a popular illustrated story-poem about two boys who perform nasty tricks on people. Written by Wilhelm Busch in Germany in the 1840s, it was first translated into English in 1871.[20] Their victims are Widow Tibbets, who had laying hens (Max and Moritz eat them); Mr. Buck, the Tailor (they cut his bridge across a deep pond while he is on it); the cleric Mr. Lampel (they put gun-powder in his pipe); their Uncle Fritz (they put big bedbugs under his covers); the baker (they try to steal his cookies but, instead, they get covered in flour and thrown into the oven); and a farmer (when they try to steal his grain, he has them milled). It is unlikely that the high-minded patrons of *The Chicago Tribune* had this sort of rough comic strip in mind for their children.

Foxy Grandpa, drawn by Carl Schultze, another German-American artist, was a popular comic strip

of somewhat nobler intent. Albert Payson Terhune, of *New York World*, told *Current Literature* that comic strips are "for the most primitive people on earth, children who have not yet developed a refined sense of humor." In describing the *Foxy Grandpa*, Terhune notes that, "The Foxy Grandpa series really taught a trenchant moral lesson. In bald language, it told of two bad boys who were always trying to get the best of a nice old man. But he always got the best of them. Punishment generally follows transgressions and in this respect they teach a valued lesson."[21]

It also seems apparent that the *Tribune* was intent on getting a German artist because German humor magazines were particularly successful. According to Ann Taylor Allen, some 2,100 magazines were formed in Germany between 1880 and 1900. The satirical press, or *Witzblatter*, was part of this trend. Although circulation information is somewhat inconsistent as to year, some data documenting their popularity is available. In 1890, *Kladderadatsch*
had a circulation of 50,000, *Muenchener Fliegerlin Blaetter* had a circulation of 20,000, *Ulk*, the humorous Sunday supplement of the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*, had a circulation of 70,000 in 1908 and *Berliner Illustrierte* had a 1914 circulation of 600,000.[22]

James Keeley met Lyonel Feininger in 1906 through a *New York Times* writer in Paris. By this time, Feininger had established his reputation as a political cartoonist and a talented illustrator. In a 1901 article, Berlin journalist and cultural critic Georg Hermann called Feininger "first among Berlin draftsmen."[23] Feininger's career as a professional cartoonist began in 1894, when he sold his first work to *Ulk*. The *Tageblatt* made him so well known that he was able to sell to other German magazines including *Lustige Blaetter, Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung, Sporthumor* and others. During the 1890s and early 1900s, he drew hundreds of cartoons for these magazines, chiefly taking a liberal view of domestic and foreign political issues. He was a particular critic of the class system in Germany, and of its police, ultra-nationalism and anti-Semitism.

Though he had received much of his artistic education in Germany and worked there all of his adult life, Feininger understood the American sense of humor because he was born and raised in the United States. Lyonel's grandparents, Adolph Michael and Lena Feininger, and his father Karl came to the United States after the German democratic revolution of 1848. When he was fourteen, Adolph and Lena sent Karl to study piano in Leipzig. Karl returned at age sixteen, settled in New York, married Cecilia Lutz (the American born daughter of a Union Army captain), and together they became successful stage musicians.

Lyonel Feininger was born in Manhattan on 17 July 1871, and was raised in a bilingual family in a primarily German-American neighborhood. At public school he learned English and studied the piano under his father's relentless direction, but he was more interested in drawing and

SURRENDERSKI !!
ALL RIGHT, COMMODORE! WE SURRENDER ! PUT AWAY YOUR COUGH-DROPS !
OW! MURDER !
TELL 'EM WE'RE AMERICAN CITIZENS !
IT'S ANOTHER RUSSIAN OUTRAGE !

Feininger had not yet left his career as a political cartoonist in Berlin when he drew *The Kin-der-Kids*. Here Daniel Webster warns a Russian anarchist that he is an American citizen.

art. Despite the boy's wishes, when Lyonel turned sixteen, his father sent him to study music at the Leipzig Music Conservatory. His intended teacher was out of the country, so Lyonel's parents permitted him to attend the Hamburg School of Arts and Crafts instead. In 1888 he moved to Berlin while his parents went on their last concert tour together. Karl and Cecilia separated soon thereafter. At this time, though he was preparing for his entrance exams for the Koenigliche Akademie in fine art, Lyonel devoted himself to doing caricatures. He wrote his American friend Francis Kortheuer, "I caricature almost all my spare time and have many fine caricature books from which I learn very much."[24] By June 1889, he was selling cartoons to German newspapers including the *Humoristische Blaetter*.

Although he would live in Germany from 1887 to 1936, Lyonel always remained connected to the country of his birth. That American connection, which proved so crucial for his success as an cartoonist, was maintained through his lifelong friendship with Alfred Vance Churchill whom Lyonel met in 1889. Churchill, who was seven years older than Lyonel, opened the world of watercolors and landscapes to Feininger.[25] Kortheuer, also the son of a German-American musician, was Lyonel's other lifelong friend.

Karl Feininger visited his estranged family in Berlin in 1890 and decided that Lyonel was hanging around with too many bohemians, so he enrolled the young man in a Catholic school, St. Gervais in Liege, Belgium.[26] During his stay in Belgium, Lyonel became enamored with the Art Nouveau movement and Gothic architecture that would figure so prominently in his later work.[27] Feininger first became aware of the work of Wilhelm Busch at this time. This is odd because the stories of *Max and Moritz* were popular in the United States when young Lyonel was growing up. He first mentions Busch in a letter to Kortheuer dated 8 March 1890:

> I am going to send you one of Wilhelm Busch's German karikatur books. They are not finely drawn but they are very full of humor and life. The American caricatures are the best in the world. You will see lots of them in Judge drawn by Zim [Eugene Zimmerman]. He is really wonderful and if you buy *Judge* look out for his drawings.[28]

By May 1890 he was drawing cartoons for the *Humoristische Blaetter* and Feininger wrote his friend Kortheuer, "When I go to America, I shall go to work for *Life* and try to earn a competence for myself."[29]

In May 1891, the young artist returned to Berlin to live with his mother who rented a flat for the family. He enrolled at the atelier of the painter Adolph Schnabel where he was encouraged to draw freehand sketches of nature. Through Churchill, he discovered the work of the American draughtsman Joseph Pennell. As he saw there was a market for this style of work, he resolved to contribute to contemporary illustration in the United States. In October 1891, he returned to the Berlin Academy, but he found the teaching methods too constricting, so in November 1892 he went to Paris and stayed for six months. While there, he studied life drawing with the sculptor Fillipo Colarossi.[30]

From June 1893 through October 1894, he began seriously to consider becoming a cartoonist and illustrator, and he first wrote down his thoughts about children's literature. His views are noteworthy because they seem to be a reaction to the Busch-style of childish mayhem. Feininger compares his artistic objectives with the work of popular German children's book illustrators such as Hermann Vogel and Ludwig Richter, who mainly did decorative illustration rather than telling humorous stories in the American way. In letters to Kortheuer he expressed admiration for the work of A. B. Frost, Frederick Burr Opper and Peter Newell of *Harper's*.[31]

About a month later, he wrote to Kubin,

> I am daily more impressed with the fact that I can do more good in America than here and that my country has the first right to my services. I am just thinking now of one thing: how to better the class of juvenile illustrated works and periodicals in America. There are so few artists who have the 'gemueth' [temperament] to patiently devote themselves to this work.
>
> Our American illustrators are as a rule only such because they have the technique to draw. How few really go deep into delineation of character, humor pathos, rather than the mere outside accessories?[32]

In this same letter, he avers that he will not try to not repulse children with his drawings, "My drawings for *Harper's* are slightly caricatured but in a way which I flatter myself does not cause repulsion but only vividness to the characterization."[33] Clearly, a decade before he would be approached by the *Chicago Tribune*, in the very early years of children's oriented newspaper cartoons, Feininger was conscious of setting his work apart from the kind of vulgar slapstick comedy that would soon gain popularity. In a letter dated 22 June 1894, Feininger declared that his mission was to introduce a whimsical cartoon style into the illustration of

WEE WILLIE WINKIE'S WORLD Or how things looked to Wee Willie Winkie
Wee Willie Winkie has got up very early. Grandpa's House is still fast asleep, and the little Kitchen-Shed also. "Ho, you lazy old House," says Willie, "I beat you this time, anyway!"
At this the House opens one sleepy, blinking eye a little way, for the sun is beginning to shine in its face.
"Hello!" says the House, suddenly (it is pretty well awake by now and stares at Willie hard), "if there isn't our little Williewinks up before me, bright and early!"
At this Willewinks runs back a bit, and points his stick at the House, just to show he is not afraid. "Boom!" says he, "wake up, old lazybones, it's time to be stirring."
The House, perhaps because he is still a little drowsy, forgets Willie for a moment in order to yawn—such a yawn!
And all at once he stops yawning, opens his eyes as wide as they'll go, and sticks out his great, big red tongue at Willie. (That is the way it seems to Willie—but you see, it is only a red carpet that Bridget has put out of the window to air.)

Feininger's second strip, *Wee Willie Winkie's World*, harkened back to the days when word balloons were not used.

American children's books. He may have seen this as a way of getting back to his American roots.[34]

Happily, he found both a patron and an audience for his art. John Kenneth Bangs, the very popular children's author and editor of *Harper's Young People* magazine, was looking for an artist to illustrate a fairy tale with a Germanic theme. He contacted Feininger and hired him to illustrate a story entitled, "How Fritz Became A Wizard." Bangs also commissioned illustrations for "Birthday Party in TopsyTurvydom" and "The Old Settler in Zurich" for his magazine.[35] Feininger's biographer, Ernst Scheyer, seems surprised to find that these illustrations seem more reminiscent of E. A. Abbey's scenes of Shakespearean England than Vogel's fantasy of the German Middle Ages.[36] This is, however, hardly surprising. Although the boy may have grown up with many German books, his American education would have been far more strongly influenced by Abbey's Shakespeare than Vogel. In another way, Lyonel's childhood may have greatly influenced his quest for charm rather than sensation, since he grew up in an upper middle class household. His grandparents had owned a china shop in Germany, and their home was surely filled with delicate finery. His parents were among the leading musicians of the day. As first generation immigrants, growing up at a time of strong xenophobia, they made every effort to identify themselves with the noblest of virtues. As demonstrated in Karl's letters to his son, they were driven by the highest artistic ideals.

Through the end of the decade, Feininger devoted himself to becoming a renowned cartoonist, aiming his whimsical work at adults. In 1895 he began drawing for *Ulk* and found a steady job with the magazine from 1897 through 1898, receiving a salary of 4,000-5,000 marks per year.[37] By contrast, some ten years later, the *Chicago Tribune* would pay him 24,000 marks to create cartoons for them. During the 1890s, he drew for the best German political, humor and recreational magazines. In 1898, his sisters Helen and Bisa both died of consumption.[38] They had accompanied their mother to Berlin and had been his constant companions all of his life. After a year of heartfelt grieving, he was ready to settle down. In 1900, when Feininger was twenty-nine years old, Felix Strothman introduced him to Clara Fürst, the daughter of the renowned muralist, Gustav Fürst. He stole Clara away from Strothman, who was her first beau, and married her in 1900. Because most of Feininger's papers were maintained by his second wife Julia, little information is available about that first union. It is known that the couple had two daughters, Lorre and Marianne, and that Feininger kept in contact with the girls well after his marriage dissolved.[39]

During the period of his first marriage, Feininger's work was exhibited as well as widely published. His work appeared in some seventy issues of *Ulk* and almost every issue of *Lustige Blaetter*. In successive years, he participated in the fifth, sixth and eighth Berlin Secession exhibition and in another exhibition, the Grosse Berliner Kunst Ausstellung.[40] There may be signs in Feininger's work of the period that he was unhappy, as his drawings were notably more angry than his previous work. His earlier work featured light-hearted scenes of absent-minded professors, shy swains, and bad-tempered mothers-in-law. But in 1903 and 1904, he drew a caricature of an anthropomorphized runaway train, another of thieves in the night, and still another, of himself, trying and failing to build a summer-house for his wife and daughters.

Not all of his troubles centered around the home. Feininger chafed under the strong direction that he received from his German editors. Alexander Mozkowski, editor of *Lustige Blaetter*, described the process:

> The editor designs the drawings, establishing the content; often he stipulates this right down to the details and he expects the artist to follow these instructions. If an editor has a good imagination as well as an ability to draw, he will send a black-and-white or colored sketch as a guide. The method puts a certain constraint on the artist, although it prevents him from failing to produce what the editor needs—if the subject is a good idea—it guarantees him an effect.[41]

Then, in 1905, Feininger met the woman who was to most greatly influence his life and transform his artistic vision from that of a cartoonist to that of a painter. Julia Berg Lillienfeld was also an artist and also married. Feininger left Clara and the children to live with Julia and they eventually married in 1908. Although Karl Feininger had also separated from his family, he felt obliged to give his thirty-four year old son some advice. His fatherly counsel, coming at the time when the artist would return to creating illustrations for children, provides an important window into the values and ideals with which the artist was raised. Karl Feininger expressed sympathy for his son's unhappiness, but he warned him not to defy the German laws and conventions against adultery. Instead the father told the son to sacrifice his egoism for the sake of his art, "For without patience and lofty self-abnegation, you can arrive at nothing great either as a man or as artist."[42] Eventually, Karl Feininger changed his mind about

The Kin-der-Kids consistently took on challenges that would entice young readers.

Julia Lillienfeld and most willingly accepted her into the family.[43] From the moment that Julia came into his life, Lyonel Feininger worked to become a serious artist.[44] She encouraged him to begin doing lithographs and etchings. By becoming a cartoonist for the *Chicago Tribune*, Feininger was able to earn enough money to live in Paris and devote himself to learn his art under his old master, Colarossi.

The *Tribune* offered Feininger some 24,000 marks ($6,000) to create two comic strips, the first, *The Kin-der-Kids*, a kind of children's adventure strip and the second, *Wee Willie Winkie's World*, about a boy who wanders around in a magical land.[45] The two strips had clear antecedents in the *Katzenjammer Kids* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. Just a year earlier, the *New York Herald* had hired Winsor McCay to create its own gentle Sunday feature. Undoubtedly, Keeley and publisher Joseph Medill McCormick hoped a similar *Nemo*-style strip would be popular, perhaps popular enough to syndicate.[46]

As cartoon historian Dennis Wepman notes, there is little coherence in the story of *The Kin-der-Kids*, but a continuous thread of continuity linked its thirty-one rather self-consciously fanciful weekly installments in which their episodic adventures took them to England and Russia. In each case, Feininger had fun with the dialects of the supporting characters. Wepman's description of the Kids is particularly striking:

> At the center of the strip's cast were the grotesque Kin-der-Kids themselves: the pompous Daniel Webster, who wore an undertaker's crêpe-ribboned hat and was always engrossed in a book; Strenuous Teddy , who could break chains with his biceps and whose knowledge of jiu-jitsu enabled him to best whole teams of strong men; Pie-Mouth who ate so continuously that at one point he became a perfect sphere and had to be rolled like a ball. Accompanying them were an emaciated dachshund named Sherlock Bones and an Oriental wind-up toy, the "Clockwork Waterbaby," named Japanski.[47]

Blackbeard writes that *The Kin-der-Kids* was a complete comic strip in every way. It featured a recurrent crew of bizarre characters, an involved story line based on dialogue exchange, and—a real innovation for the time—a full-fledged, frankly suspenseful week-to-week narrative continuity.[48] It also fits the more rigorous criteria of David Kunzle, who defines the comic strip by the four following parameters: a sequence of images; a preponderance of image over text; a mass medium; and a moral and topical story.[49]

Rosemary Gallick suggests that Feininger continued the development of the popular child or "kid" strip genre of early twentieth century comics, and enlarged its scope and style, transforming the genre with his depiction of epic psychological struggles in a sophisticated international style.[50] Like Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, Feininger's *Kin-der-Kids* is an odyssey. Whereas McCay's elusive quest was pursued in the dream world or unconscious, Feininger's story takes place on the high seas.[51] Where McCay's fine line drawings are somewhat precious, Feininger's illustrations are rough enough to evoke laughter and fun. I found no evidence to support Blackbeard's assertions that the *Tribune* actually wanted pictorial, unconnected weekly gag humor in non-strip formats, this being somehow more elevated in their eyes than the Hearst-style stuff, but since Feininger was their big catch among the Germans, he was allowed to have his way.[52]

The international cast of *Kin-der-Kids* was introduced with great fanfare on 29 April 1906, and the first adventure began on 6 May 1906. The boys depart New York "Triumphant in the family bath-

tub." Crying and waving good-bye, they take leave of the Statue of Liberty, setting sail on a universal sea, reminiscent of Feininger's own sailing for Hamburg in 1887. The exuberant adolescent males are pursued by the stern Aunty Jim-Jam. As the boys and their dog navigate the sea, Aunty Jim-Jam pursues them, with a bottle of castor oil in hand, in a balloon and an airplane. Whether she intends to use the castor oil as medicine or punishment is never made clear. Gallick writes that Feininger's status as a citizen of two continents found symbolic expression in his strips. *The Kin-der-Kids* bridges the id and ego, youth and age, male and female, duty and self-expression through the interaction of the airborne Aunty Jim-Jam and the nautical boys.[53]

The story, such as it was, made little sense, but the graphic style and the rudimentary attempts at cartoon characterization placed Feininger's work among the most interesting experiments in the early days of the new medium. His surreal artwork reflected that *The Kin-der-Kids* was clearly the work of an original and highly inventive artist. In his second strip, *Wee Willie Winkie's World*, Feininger replaces word balloons with printed legends that convey Willie's thoughts, a bit of a throwback to pre-Outcault days. It does, however, present the idea of an ever-changing landscape, a concept that would later become a hallmark of George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*. Feininger's artistic themes were expressed in a simple geometric style that owes much to the tradition of the woodcut and anticipates his later work in cubism. Feininger's sense of design which would later become a hallmark of his more serious work is evident in the strips themselves. When Feininger first started painting (1910-1919), he often portrayed over-sized and sharply-angled people almost as part of the architecture.[54]

It is known that Keeley helped name the two strips,[55] but the name of the first had a special significance that has been, heretofore, overlooked. Clearly the *Kin-der-Kids* were named to suggest the German-style *Katzenjammer Kids*. William Randolph Hearst suggested the name "Katzenjammer" to Dirks but, according to Scheyer, there was nothing German about them except the names [Katzenjammer was German slang for hangover, literally meaning a cat's wail].[56] Until now, scholars have noted that the word *Kinder* is German for children and left it at that. No one has mentioned the obvious English aspect of the name. The strip that Feininger developed for the *Tribune* was not about hooligans, it was about sweeter, gentler "kinder" kids. Clearly, from the intent of the *Tribune* to create a strip that would mollify the critics and from Feininger's own stated intentions as well as his work to that date, the *Kin-der-Kids* was a new kind of comic strip, a carefully-crafted, graphically-pleasing feature involving good (if somewhat strange) kids in exciting adventures.

Feininger remembered his treatment by German editors with some distaste. On Christmas Day in 1912, he reflected in a letter to his friend, artist Alfred Kubin, what torment it was to try to meet the editor's demands even half way. Thinking back, he noted that his deal with the *Chicago Tribune* seemed to have liberated him from the world of German magazines. The contract from Chicago made it possible for him to move to Paris and "meet up with the world of art" and abandon cartooning forever. In that same letter, he noted how uncommercial his work was becoming.[57] For their part, the *Tribune* found little interest for Feininger's work coming from their syndicate clients and reader demand did not warrant the long-distance negotiations. Modern readers should not dismiss Feininger's cartoons because he could not find and audience at the turn of the century. As often happens, great artists, especially those who perform in a popular vernacular, often go unacclaimed until after their deaths. ●

NOTES

1. While violence has virtually disappeared from the newspaper comic pages, it still reigns in comic books. John Leo, "Good Drama, Not the Krazy Kat Kind," *U.S. News and World Report* 120 (26 Feb 1996): 22.

2. Ralph Berengen, "Humor of the Colored Supplement," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1906, 269-273.

3. David Kunzle traces the history of the true comic strip to late eighteenth century England, but he notes that captioned pictures and word balloons can be found in post-Renaissance work. David Kunzle, *History of the Comic Strip: The Early Comic Strip*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 1-3.

4. Elizabeth Banks, "American Yellow Journalism," *Living Age*, 218:640, 1898.

5. See, for example, "A Crime Against American Children," *Ladies Home Journal*, 9 January 1905, 5; Lindsay Swift, "Atrocities of Color Supplements," *The Printing Art*, February 1906, 34; "Cultivating Dreamfulness," Outlook, 62 (1907): 1538; Ralph Berengen, "Humor of the Colored Supplement," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1906, 269-273.

6. "Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children Issues Annual Report," *New York Times*, 24 November 1897, 12.

7. Bill Blackbeard, *Comic Strip Art of Lyonel Feininger* (Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 1994), 3.

8. "Cultivating Dreamfulness," Outlook 62 (1907): 1538.

9. Swift, "Atrocities of Color Supplements," 34.

10. "A Crime Against American Children," 5.

11. "A Crime Against American Children," 5.

12. Though Cyrus McCormick died in 1884, his wife Nettie was one of Chicago's preeminent social leaders. She lived in a grand mansion that was recognized as one of the great town houses of the Gilded Age. Under the widow's charming direction, the house became the center of Chicago society. She was one of the largest contributors to the Presbyterian Church and she helped found the McCormick Theological Union. John Tebbels, An *American Dynasty: The Story of the McCormicks, Medills and Pattersons* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1947), 68.

13. Tebbels, *An American Dynasty*, 68.

14. Ben Hecht, *The Front Page* (New York: Covici-Friede, 1933).

15. Teenage boys who peddled candy, tobacco, newspapers and other items were called candy butchers.

16. James Weber Linn, *James Keeley, Newspaperman* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1937), 97.

17. Linn, *James Keeley, Newspaperman*, 116-117.

18. Linn, *James Keeley, Newspaperman*, 127-138.

19. In 1900, the population of Chicago was 1.7 million people. Germans, that is those who were born in Germany or those who considered themselves of German stock, accounted for some 428,000 or about a quarter of Chicago's population. "Chicago's Growth over the Century," *Chicago Daily News*, 17 January 1976, 1; "People of Chicago, Who We Are and Who We Have Been: Census Data on Foreign Stock and Race, City of Chicago Development and Planning," *Chicago Daily News*, 17 January 1976, 8.

20. Charles T. Brooks translation of 1871 can be found in *Max and Moritz: With Many More Mischief-Makers More or Less Human or Approximately Animal*, ed. H. Arthur Klein (New York: Dover, 1962).

21. "Sounding the Doom of the Comics," *Current Literature*, December 1908, 630.

22. Ann Taylor Allen, *Satire and Society in Wilheimine Germany: Kladderadatsch and Simplicissimus 1890-1914* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 29-37.

23. Ernst Scheyer, *Lyonel Feininger: Caricature & Fantasy* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1964), 85.

24. Feininger's letter to Kortheuer, 29 July 1888. American Archives of Art, Washington, DC.

25. By 1904, Churchill would become Professor of History and Interpretation of Art at Smith College, and later Director of Art at that same institution. *Lyonel Feininger: The Early Years, 1889-1910* (London: Marlborough Fine Art, 1987), 31.

26. Feininger's letter to Churchill, November 1890. American Archives of Art, Washington, DC.

27. Scheyer, *Lyonel Feininger*, 27-28.

28. Scheyer, *Lyonel Feininger*, 41.

29. Feininger's letter to Kortheuer, 28 August 1890. American Archives of Art, Washington, DC. Partially quoted in Luckhardt, 9.

30. *Lyonel Feininger: The Early Years*, 33.

31. Feininger's letter to Kortheuer, 10 March 1894, American Archives of Art, Washington, DC. Scheyer, *Lyonel Feininger*, 64, 66.

32. Feininger's letter to Kubin, 4 April 1894. American Archives of Art, Washington, DC.

33. Feininger's letter to Kubin, 4 April 1894.

34. Feininger's letter to Kubin, 22 June 1894, American Archives of Art, Washington, DC.

35. Kenneth Bangs, "How Fritz Became A Wizard," *Harper's Young People*, 15 (2 October 1894): 820-822.

36. Scheyer, *Lyonel Feininger*, 41.

37. Feininger's letters to Kubin, 3-6 April 1894 American Archives of Art, Washington, DC.

38. *Lyonel Feininger: The Early Years*, Feininger's letters to Kubin, 3-6 April 1894, American Archives of Art, Washington, DC.

39. Feininger papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

40. Ulrich Luckhardt, *Lyonel Feininger* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag 1989), 16-17.

41. Luckhardt, *Lyonel Feininger*, 11.

42. Karl Feininger to Lyonel, 29 April 1906. Feininger papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

43. For instance, in a letter dated 4 October 1908, he congratulates Lyonel on his marriage to Julia.

44. Lyonel to Julia Berg, nee Lillienfeld. (Listed as Letters to Julia Feininger, but they lived in common-law marriage until 1908. They had a son, Andreas, in 1906.) 10 February 1906, as cited in Ness, *Lyonel Feininger*, 70.

45. Feininger's letter to Kubin, 10 February 1906, as cited in Ness, *Lyonel Feininger*, 70.

46. Blackbeard, *Comic Strip Art of Lyonel Feininger*, 4.

47. Dennis Wepman, *Encyclopedia of American Comics*, ed. Ron Goulart (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 217.

48. Blackbeard, *Comic Strip Art of Lyonel Feininger*, 4.

49. David Kunzle, *History of the Comic Strip: The Early Comic Strip*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 1-3.

50. Rosemary Gallick, "The Comic Art of Lyonel Feininger, 1906," *Journal of Popular Culture* 10 (1977): 667-675.

51. Judith O'Sullivan, Great American Comic Strip (Boston: Little Brown, 1990), 51-52.

52. Blackbeard's assertions appear on page 5 of his collection of Feininger reproductions. For a better discussion of the origin of weekly continuity, see David Kunzle's *History of the Comic Strip*.

53. Gallick, "The Comic Art of Lyonel Feininger, 1906," 669.

54. In Luckhardt see for example *The Red Clown*, 1919 (103); *Trumpeters I*, 1912 (70); or Newpaper Readers II, (97).

55. Scheyer, *Lyonel Feininger*, 41.

56. Martin Sheridan, *Comics and Their Creators* (n.p.: Cushman, Hale & Flint, 1942), 58.

57. *Lyonel Feininger*, ed. June Ness (New York: Praeger, 1974), 36-37.

Mythology and Superheroes

BY MARK DAVID NEVINS

This essay is an analysis of Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology *by Richard Reynolds (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), originally published in London by B. T. Batsford in 1992.*

Scholars and comics readers would and should welcome a careful, reflective, and critically sophisticated study of superhero comics in light of myth: how superhero comics represent a sort of modern mythological system; or how these comics fulfill the cultural needs or fill the cultural niche in America that myths do or have done in other cultures; or how superheroes can tell us interesting things about the people and society that produce them. Richard Reynolds' *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* offers nothing like such a study, either in the book's content or in its intellectual weight; the book is ultimately very disappointing for students of comics as well as for students of mythology, especially given the expectations raised by the title and back-cover blurb.

Rather than merely dismissing *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* as a poor study, however, I would like to put forward in this essay some constructive criticism on what a book on this topic might do, and how it might go about doing it. This in-depth criticism is offered for two reasons: first, because the study of comics is still a young field, and attempts such as Reynolds' should be encouraged if the field is to mature into a robust discipline; second, because a close analysis of Reynolds' work is the only way to show the book's strengths—Reynolds does have many good ideas, even if they go mostly undeveloped. My intent in this essay is to try to work with Reynolds' text in order to help build a sort of heuristic for fruitful discussion of superhero comics as myths or as a mythology. There is rich potential in the topic that Reynolds has chosen to address here, and it would be a shame if *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* were to be seen by its readers, or by scholars in allied fields, as the final statement on the subject of myth and the superhero comic.

Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology has three

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basic faults. First, it lacks any real scholarly or intellectual rigor. Second, it affects a *faux* scholarly veneer, dropping names of established scholars as well as jargon and buzzwords from current critical theory while betraying no evidence that the author has much studied or understands those thinkers or ideas. Third (and most alarming), the book exhibits no apparent structure, flow of argument, or sense of who its audience is: readers familiar with superhero comics will find far too much analysis-free plot summary, and scholars of literature or cultural studies will find little to take away in terms of useful theory, argument, or developed thought. Reynolds' book posits some interesting ideas, but it does not explore these ideas, nor does it relate them by means of any overarching thesis or underlying structure of argument. Any value *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* has is merely as a sort of unorganized catalogue of some of the interesting questions that one might raise about superhero comics and their place in American culture; the fact that the book does not explore any of these questions in much depth makes the reading of it, finally, a thoroughly frustrating experience.

It is no surprise that the concepts of "myth" and "mythology" seem to muddy the waters when applied to comics, since use of the term "myth" in common parlance is so unsystematic, and since scholars of myth, myth-theorists, and folklorists all remain divided about the kinds of texts the term "myth" should embrace. Any study of myth, then, must necessarily begin with a definition of terms. Reynolds never does define what he means by "myth" or "mythology," and therein lies his essential problem. While scholars of myth cannot agree on a definition, most would accept a classification scheme which distinguishes myth from, say, legends and folktales, wherein myths tend to deal with divine or immortal beings (who may or may not have dealings with humans), and with questions of origins and the essence of culture, whereas folktales and legends generally do not. Reynolds, however, seems to be unfamiliar with the problematics of defining myth and mythology, and uninterested in thinking about his terms and the bases of his argument.[1] To give the reader some sense of common ground and a fixed reference point for a discussion of superheroes as myth, Reynolds needs to take on the problematic question of what myth is, what myth does, and the role myth plays in any culture (even if that culture is merely the body of readers who enjoy superhero comics). The fact that *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* has no overview of the terms of its argument or the scope and essence of its thesis, or indeed any introduction at all, is an early warning sign of the book's deficiencies.

The problem with most attempts to discuss superheroes as mythology is that they tend to focus on surface and structural similarities, and fasten on superficial resemblances, at the expense of any significant deep analysis. The naive agenda of such discussions is to attempt to lend to the superhero comic some "validity" as an artform. Thus, we have seen innumerable arguments that the adventures of a given comic book superhero have much to do with the stories of the *Iliad, Odyssey, Beowulf,* or Arthurian romance. This kind of facile comparison is at best uninteresting, and at worst sophomoric—and the agenda that underlies most of these comparisons is entirely wrong-headed. On the other hand, a study of superhero comics as fulfilling some kind of myth-function in modern American society could be a very fruitful endeavor. Above and beyond superficial similarities between Superman and Herakles or Beowulf or Gilgamesh, what do these stories do for the societies that produced them? What role do they play? Why do they have such a widespread appeal, even when the audience knows that the stories they are hearing are not "true"? Reynolds glances at some of these questions, but *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* ultimately has no development of ideas, no probing exploration of important issues. While Reynolds has some interesting things to say near the book's end—for example, on the *X-Men, The Dark Knight Returns,* and *Watchmen*—these comments have little to do with the purported topic of his book (mythology), and at that late point in the game come as pleasant surprises and moments of lucidity in an otherwise tangled mess of potentially fascinating topics.

Eschewing any introduction or preface, Reynolds begins his book with Chapter One, "Masked Heroes," which begins with a good idea: modern superheroes have become "a body of contemporary mythology" (7). Just as mythologies in traditional cultures are not transmitted through a single text, superheroes are known to most modern people not in connection with any single text, but through movies, comic books and strips, and television shows (one thinks of Walter Ong's ideas about "secondary orality"). At this point the reader is keen for a deeper discussion of the nature of the superhero in modern society, but finds instead an abrupt shift to a close reading of the origin of Superman in *Action Comics* #1. Reynolds does well to point out that this particular story is also "the origin of what later become clichés" (10) of the superhero story, but the rest of his comments are essentially a shoddy appropriation of Joseph Campbell's idea of the eight-staged "monomyth" (a structure that Campbell

argues underlies all heroic stories) coupled with some loosely-applied principles of Russian formalism/structuralism—all to no obvious end. Positing an *ur*-myth or *ur*-text is by no means an original idea, and Reynolds is disingenuous in not being more forthcoming about his sources and influences—primarily Campbell. Indeed, some more significant discussion of Campbell would have been appreciated here, even though Campbell's work itself is not unproblematic for today's scholars of myth.

A bigger problem with Reynolds' argument about Action #1 is that he ignores other more obvious and more culturally interesting "sources" for the genesis of the American superhero: the *mythos* of the American West and American individualism that spawned such serialized forerunners of superheroes as James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo stories, and the Horatio Alger tales; the pulp heroes (the debt Superman owes in both specific and general terms to Doc Savage, for example, is under-emphasized in every consideration of Superman that I have read); the Victorian idea of the hero or superman, which owes primarily to Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Carlyle; and Romantic ideas about the individual, shaped to American sensibilities by writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Siegel and Shuster's Superman did not leap into being out of nothingness (or in a dream), as Reynolds paints it, even though that version of Superman's origin might make for good storytelling.

Above all, this first chapter exhibits the lack of structure and the underdevelopment of thought or argument that plagues the whole book, and glancing references to Eco, Campbell, and Frazer serve no purpose save to give an appearance of scholarly respectability. Reynolds segues, inexplicably, from his "working definition of the superhero genre" (17) into a consideration of the typical settings of superhero comics, and a confused discussion of the city (New York, Gotham City, Metropolis) as "sign" (19ff). Following next is a close reading of the 1940 special issue comic story "Batman and Robin Visit the 1940 World's Fair," but this close reading seems to have no connection to any of the issues Reynolds raises earlier in the chapter. Interesting ideas, such as "the partnership between Iron Man (science) and Thor (magic)" (16), are hinted at but not explored (Reynolds says he will return to this particular idea in Chapter Three, but never does so to any significant degree). At the end of the chapter, Reynolds turns to some intriguing points about why some characters with superpowers turn bad, that is, into "supervillains." This section would have profited much from a fuller discussion, as here Reynolds begins to get at some of the essential questions that any myth urges its audience to consider: What is good? What is evil? How should I act? Sadly, Reynolds fails to follow up on this opportunity to build a thesis or a theory.

Chapter Two, "Costumed Continuity," displays the same lack of structure and developed argument as the first chapter, while again, frustratingly, dropping interesting ideas that go unexplored. It begins with an unintelligible attempt to connect the semiotics of superhero costumes to Saussurean linguistics (26ff), and then jumps to a panel-by-panel close reading of a single page of *Iron Man* #108. While this page may indeed be "a fine example of superhero sequential art" (27), its connection to the argument at hand remains unclear.[2]

While his argument is fuzzy, what is entirely clear is that Reynolds himself has been thumbing through recent catalogues of Modern Language Association conferences, and is keen to drop terms from current trendy critical movements (note, for example, the obligatory mention of the "gaze" on page 37). Reynolds is eager to exploit the possibilities for a study of the fetishism of costume in superhero comics (and indeed superheroes would seem a topic much riper for such possibilities than Shakespeare or the Victorian novel, two fields that have seen attention to this topic in recent years), but he gives short shrift even to this juicy subject with a cursory glance at *Watchmen*, all the while offering the reader no sense that he has done any reading of psychoanalytic theory. Leaving the subject of costume fetishism undeveloped, Reynolds then jumps awkwardly to "good girl" art and its relationship to pornography (34ff). Throughout this chapter Reynolds quick-cuts from idea to idea like an MTV music video, an especially frustrating technique since this chapter lays out a smorgasbord of genuinely interesting topics. Whatever other faults he has, Reynolds seems to intuit quite accurately what the good questions are. Unfortunately, he also seems to have no idea how to go about exploring them, never mind answering them.

A problem throughout the book, Chapter Two's abuse of flavor-of-the-month scholarly jargon is particularly annoying (for example, the term "metatext" is misused on page 48). I am still not sure what to make of Reynolds' obscure claim that "superheroes are the protagonists of the myth which is constructed as an intertextual reading of their careers" (52) save that Reynolds seems to have had a nasty run-in with some poorly-translated French critical theory. Elsewhere, Reynolds argues that the Marvel and DC universes are really an example of intertextuality (38). The possibilities of this idea are intriguing:

it is a pity it is not developed here.

Reynolds is particularly interested in the idea of "continuity," a characteristic he cites as a hallmark of superhero comics. He draws a good analogy between the great pressure of conforming to continuity that is placed upon the authors of superhero stories ("Will this story contradict any detail, no matter how small, that has come before?") and Malory's systematizing of the wide tradition of Arthurian materials (48). Today's superhero writers are forced into the same systematizing role as Malory was, contending as they must with hundreds of previously-published stories that many readers show an alarming familiarity with, and in this conflation of history, audience expectations, and multiple versions of stories lies the core of a superb essay. Also, following up on Malory and Romance, a fuller discussion of narrative mode would have been welcome. Even though a bit old fashioned, Northrop Frye's discussion of Romance (in *Anatomy of Criticism*) would be worth Reynolds' consideration, particularly given the ways that some recent superhero comics attempt to undermine conventions of their genre that the reader assumes are static (that is, the ways some recent superhero writers try to create stories that subvert the mode of "romance" that we expect their superheroes to inhabit). Reynolds' claims regarding the protagonists and antagonists of the superhero story, and his assertion that the villain is "the true star of each story" (51) would also be interesting to compare to Frye's structure.

Elsewhere in this chapter, Reynolds conjures up the cultural critic Roland Barthes for no apparent reason (50), and Barthes' presence becomes troubling as the reader begins to imagine how apt a model Barthes might have been for Reynolds: Barthes is peerless in his use of pop culture artifacts to read the cultures that produce them. While Reynolds concludes this chapter with the assertion that the "myths [of the superhero] are everywhere touched on and excited by the individual [comic] stories" (52), we remain, now halfway through the book, no closer to understanding what Reynolds means by "myth," and how superhero comics are to be understood in the context of the cultures that create and enjoy them.

Chapter Three opens with a sentence that demonstrates that Reynolds has given no thought at all to what "myth" or "mythology" mean: "Just as other genres of comics have appropriated existing narrative mythologies (the Wild West, anthropomorphism, horror). . . ." (53) Though the Wild West might be considered an important part of some larger "Mythology of America," anthropomorphism and horror are, of course, decidedly not mythologies. This chapter, again, displays glimmers of interesting arguments, but as elsewhere these remain undeveloped and not tied to any larger developed thesis. Titled "Deciphering the Myths," this chapter is broken into shorter treatments of Thor, Superman, Batman, and "The New Middle Ages" (an idea taken from Umberto Eco), which, instead of acting together to provide a heuristic for reading superhero comics as mythology, instead are merely more ingredients in an uncooked intellectual stew. While Reynolds is compelling and original in his observations on the way that Thor and Norse mythology were readily graftable onto comics because superheroes had somehow made comics audiences familiar with the mode of myth, his sections on Superman and the Batman are for the most part "myth theory lite" and "psychology lite" that appropriate (and poorly apply) their best ideas from Campbell and Freud.

The high point of this chapter is the discussion of how the Batman's most interesting opponents seem to understand his mind, and are essentially like him or are mirror-images of him (see, for example, Alan Moore's story *The Killing Joke*); the idea is not a new one, but Reynolds handles it surprisingly well given the limited expectations one has by page

67 of this book. Chapter Three concludes with random free association between superheroes and American politics and ideology, satire, values, race, gender, and sexuality—all good topics, but frustratingly unexplored. Near the chapter's end, Reynolds asserts that "Like most important signs, the superhero supports a varied and contradictory battery of readings" (83). Granted, superheroes are multivalent signs, but Reynolds has brought us no closer to understanding what these signs represent, or how they work.

Chapter Four, "Three Key Texts," is again broken into parts, and here Reynolds is at his best, probably because a lack of a larger thesis is less troubling in the case of the close readings he undertakes in this chapter. Reynolds begins with a consideration of *X-Men* issues 108-143, and yet, astoundingly, he does little to discuss what may be one of the most self-conscious attempts in the history of superhero comics to emulate mythic content and structure. In addition to setting the dominant tone and style for superhero comics of the 1980s and 1990s Chris Claremont and John Byrne's run on *X-Men*, notably "The Dark Phoenix Saga," was an attempt to create a saga or cycle about a group of misunderstood heroes combating a culture-threatening menace in order to save their people. This narrative formula is, of course, the essential story underlying many of the most compelling western mythic stories (for example, *Gilgamesh*, the Norse *Eddas, Beowulf*, much of Graeco-Roman mythology). Reynolds instead spends most of the X-Men section discussing page layout. While his treatment of Byrne's "cinematic style" is the most lucid section in the book (he really does capture the essence of Byrne's appeal), such an analysis is entirely unrelated to the book's stated purpose. It is inconceivable that a work with the title *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* misses the chance to explore the so-obviously "mythic" things that Claremont and Byrne were trying to accomplish.

The other parts of this chapter focus on Frank Miller's revisionist *The Dark Knight Returns* and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' "deconstructive" *Watchmen*. Following a poorly-done account of "highbrow vs. lowbrow" marketing strategy (again, tangential at best to the chapter's presumable thesis), Reynolds offers a rather weak interpretation of *The Dark Knight Returns* as social criticism, and, additionally, misses Miller's own problematic arch-conservative biases, which pervade the work. Saying "Batman is a sign invested with so many layers of social meaning that each separate reversal of the use of that sign is an attention-grabbing narrative event" (103) sounds compelling, but Reynolds does not bring us any further along. To his credit, Reynolds does point out that the Batman at the end of *The Dark Knight Returns* is a very different man from the Bruce Wayne at the beginning. A serial comic book (or "Romance," to return to Frye's term) hero who changes fundamentally is indeed an innovation in superhero narrative (bringing Romance more into the realm of the novel), and the repercussions of this Miller story continue to affect even far less ambitious superhero tales a decade after its publication.

In the *Watchmen* section Reynolds shows a good understanding of this work's canny self-referentiality, and the way it both affirms and "deconstructs" the content and form of superhero comics; however, these issues are irrelevant to the ostensible subject of the book—superheroes as *myth*—and rather than writing on *Watchmen* here Reynolds might have done better to spend his time exploring Moore's post-Nietzschean ideas in the first sixteen issues of *Miracleman* (originally printed as *Marvelman* in the UK, in *Warrior* magazine). Had Reynolds' focus really been superheroes as modern mythic figures, a consideration of *Miracleman* (the basic premise of which is "What if superheroes *really* did exist?") could have been quite profitable.[3] While I am skeptical that "*Watchmen*'s so-called 'postmodernism' largely comprises this process of stripping away the accumulation of 50 years of continuity" (117), I am intrigued by Reynolds' claim that *Watchmen* is "a text which transcends the accumulated myths through which superhero texts are read" (117), and (as so often elsewhere) I wish he had fleshed out this claim with a fuller discussion, not to mention textual support.

Reynolds concludes Chapter Four by asserting that, like Alan Moore, comic readers as a whole are moving "away from the superhero" (118). The continuing popularity of fairly conventional superhero comics for younger generations would not seem to bear out this claim, but, granting for a moment that it is true, why is it true? Has the myth of the superhero reached its terminal point of usefulness for American culture? Will it be thoroughly reinvented? Or are we merely seeing a period of dormancy in the popularity in the traditional super heroic narrative such as the one witnessed after the Second World War, and, to a lesser extent, in the late 1960s and early '70s around the time of the "Underground" movement?

In conclusion, I should say that I really wanted to like this book, and I had high hopes for it; hopes which were, unfortunately, nearly completely unfulfilled. Nevertheless, there is a need for such a book as *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* might have

been. Reynolds raises many interesting questions and issues in his book (though perhaps not always intentionally), questions and issues well worth exploring. This work could have been a study of the mythic function of superheroes in today's society—do superhero comics hold the same cultural place that myth or religion once did? It could have been an exploration of the role that gods and heroes play in societies that do not believe in them—compare, for example, the uses to which late classical authors put Graeco-Roman myth.[4] Or this could have been a book about myth-making, and the cultural role superheroes play in contemporary American society.

How can the shortcomings of *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* be explained? In looking at comics writers, some of the best "deconstructors" of the superhero *mythos* are English: Alan Moore, in *Watchmen* and *Miracleman*; Grant Morrison, in *Zenith* and *Doom Patrol*; Peter Milligan, in *Shade, The Changing Man*; and, to a certain extent, Neil Gaiman, in *Sandman*. It is possible that the same cultural distance that has allowed these writers to craft their tales has hamstrung Reynolds, who is also English, and has caused him difficulty in assessing the place superhero comics really hold in and for American culture.

As it stands, and whatever the reasons, this book is not a success; it does not do what it claims it will do, and the text Reynolds gives us stands potentially to undermine an argument that superhero comics can be read in an interesting way, for themselves as cultural artifacts, or for what they can tell us about twentieth-century American society. In a way, Reynolds is guilty of the same sort of shameless huckstering that Stan Lee perpetrated in the 1960s, when, as editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics, he glibly chanted, "Hey, Kids! Marvel comics are a modern mythology!"

Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology either needs to be re-thought, and given a central developed argument to unite its parts and address what it claims it will address, or else (and perhaps more congenial to the way Reynolds' mind seems to work) the book should have been a series of unrelated essays, since any number of the questions Reynolds raises could be the core of a superb essay. That this book came into being is a good sign, and a cause for optimism: perhaps we will see more books that attempt to study comics (superhero or "alternative") rigorously, either as an artform or as markers of culture. But for the foreseeable future, traditional scholars are going to have a difficult enough time looking upon comics scholarship seriously; we as students and scholars of the medium of comics ought not to not give them poorly conceived and carelessly executed books like this one as sticks to beat us with.

A few final practical matters: the edition I reviewed was the paperback one, and it was well-produced on good quality paper with a fine stitched binding. The book is relatively free of typographical errors, and the overall design is pleasing, though the cover design (a collage of comic covers) is rather amateurish, and adds little. The interior illustration quality is shockingly poor: illustrations are in black and white, and hover below the clarity and resolution of common photocopies. More problematically, almost all of the twenty-six illustrations are superfluous to the arguments Reynolds makes. Also, the wordless page from *Watchmen*, reproduced on page 31, has been inadvertently "flipped" (printed in mirror image). Reading the book would have been more enjoyable if information such as issue and page numbers of the comic book in question had been supplied parenthetically in the text (*Avengers* #149, p. 31), as is the common convention, rather than as awkward endnotes. ●

NOTES

1. One might expect a study of the kind that Reynolds says he is undertaking would show some significant grappling with the thoughts of Ernst Cassirer (e.g., *Mythical Thought*, the second volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*) or Sir James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*), or even early myth theorists like Otto Rank (*The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*) or Lord Raglan (*The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*). It seems to me that anyone writing about myth now must come to terms with David Doty's *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, but I grant that this is a very difficult work. I would recommend for non-specialists the easier but nevertheless superb collection of essays on myth edited by Alan Dundes, *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, especially those essays by William Bascom, Lauri Honko, G. S. Kirk, and Theodor H. Gaster. This list of works is offered not to browbeat Reynolds for his lack of research, but rather because these are some of the established important writings in the field that a scholarly reader interested in mythology might expect a book on that topic to exhibit some familiarity with, and, where appropriate, respond to.

2. Additionally, Reynolds could learn a thing or two about how to do comic page explication from Art Spiegelman. Spiegelman's "Commix: An Idiosyncratic Historical and Aesthetic Overview" in *Print* 42:6 (Nov/Dec 1988) still stands as a primer in how to read comics narrative.

3. Jim Starlin's *Warlock* stories for Marvel, or the "Fourth World" stories that Jack Kirby did for DC, are ripe for analysis along the lines of superheroes and mythology, but these tales do not even merit a mention from Reynolds.

4. See G. S. Kirk's *The Nature of Greek Myths* for a superb discussion of this topic.

emanata

Mort Walker in his **Lexicon of Comicana** *invented the term "emanata" to describe the graphic devices used by cartoonists to describe "what is going on inside" their characters. This occasional feature of* **Inks** *is intended to provide an opportunity for commentary, anecdotes of interest, and historical sketches. Readers interested in writing such a feature are invited to contact the editor.*

Percival Chubb and the League for the Improvement of the Children's Comic Supplement

by Amy Kiste Nyberg

Although the Yellow Kid and those who followed in his footsteps were very popular with newspaper readers, the introduction of the Sunday comic supplement was not universally welcomed. These early comics, populated by working class characters, were crudely executed and relied heavily on vulgar humor, offending the literary and artistic sensibilities of the middle class. In addition, the disrespect for authority and the cruelty of the pranks depicted in the strips concerned parents and educators, who worried about the impact of such role models.

In her analysis of the development of newspaper comic strips, Elsa Nystrom notes that the opposition to comics from the "genteel critic," whose main objection was to the vulgarity and poor taste of the strip, posed little danger to the existence of the comic strip, because the criticism was "intermittent, unorganized and found mainly in elitist publications." Progressive critics, however, feared the influence of the supplement on children, and organized a highly focused protest against the funnies, hoping to force newspapers to eliminate, or at least improve, the Sunday supplement.[1] One of the most influential of these critics was Percival Chubb, a well known New York educator and leader in the Ethical Culture Society, a humanistic religious movement founded in New York in 1876.

Chubb's reputation as an educator was established through his work with the Ethical Culture Society and its schools. He is thought to be one of the first advocates of incorporating drama, plays and festivals into the school curriculum. He wrote several articles, published in education journals including *Elementary School Teacher* and *Childhood Education*, that argued children learn from dramatizing work in literature, history and science and should be encouraged to produce their own dramatic festivals. He also wrote two books, *The Teaching of English* and *Festivals and Plays in Schools*.[2]

The Ethical Culture Society had strong ties to the progressive movement because of its emphasis on social action and community service, and many of its leaders were at the forefront of various reform movements as founders of the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, and the Child Study Association. The society founded the District Nursing Department in 1877, which became the Visiting Nurses Association, a leader in the establishment of settlement houses.[3]

A major focus of the Ethical Culture Society was education. One of its first actions was to establish a free kindergarten for poor children in 1878. That was expanded into the Workingman's School in 1880. After reorganization in 1890, it began to admit paying students and changed its name to the Ethical Culture School. Today, the Ethical Culture School operates two facilities, one in the Bronx and one in Manhattan.[4]

Chubb was frequently invited to be the guest speaker at various educational meetings, and he occasionally used these as a platform to speak out against comic supplements. As

A SECRET SOCIETY INITIATION IN HOGAN'S ALLEY.

Richard F. Outcault. Hogan's Alley, 13 September 1896.

the principal speaker at a 1909 meeting of the International Kindergarten Union, he called upon his listeners to ban comic supplements from the house. He argued that the comic strips glorified "the 'smart kid' . . . the worst American type of forward child." He also stressed the importance of the role of the school in helping to "transform the environment" of children:

> More and more the function of the school and the teacher becomes that of providing a protective environment in which for a few hours every day the child shall be surrounded with influences of health and quiet, of order and simple beauty. The school has to save the child from the unhealthy and unlovely world outside . . . We must begin with ourselves by working for a clean press, and above all, a dignified Sunday press.[5]

Speaking at the annual spring meeting of the New York Public School Kindergarten Association a few weeks later, Chubb again called for parents to ban comics from the home, arguing that the "elevation of taste" must come from the parent.[6] At the Child Welfare Exhibit in January 1911, Chubb once again attacked comic strips' glorification of the "cheeky, disrespectful, irreverent child." He expressed concern about the fact children were being exposed too early to an adult environment, stating, "The city is not a child's world."[7]

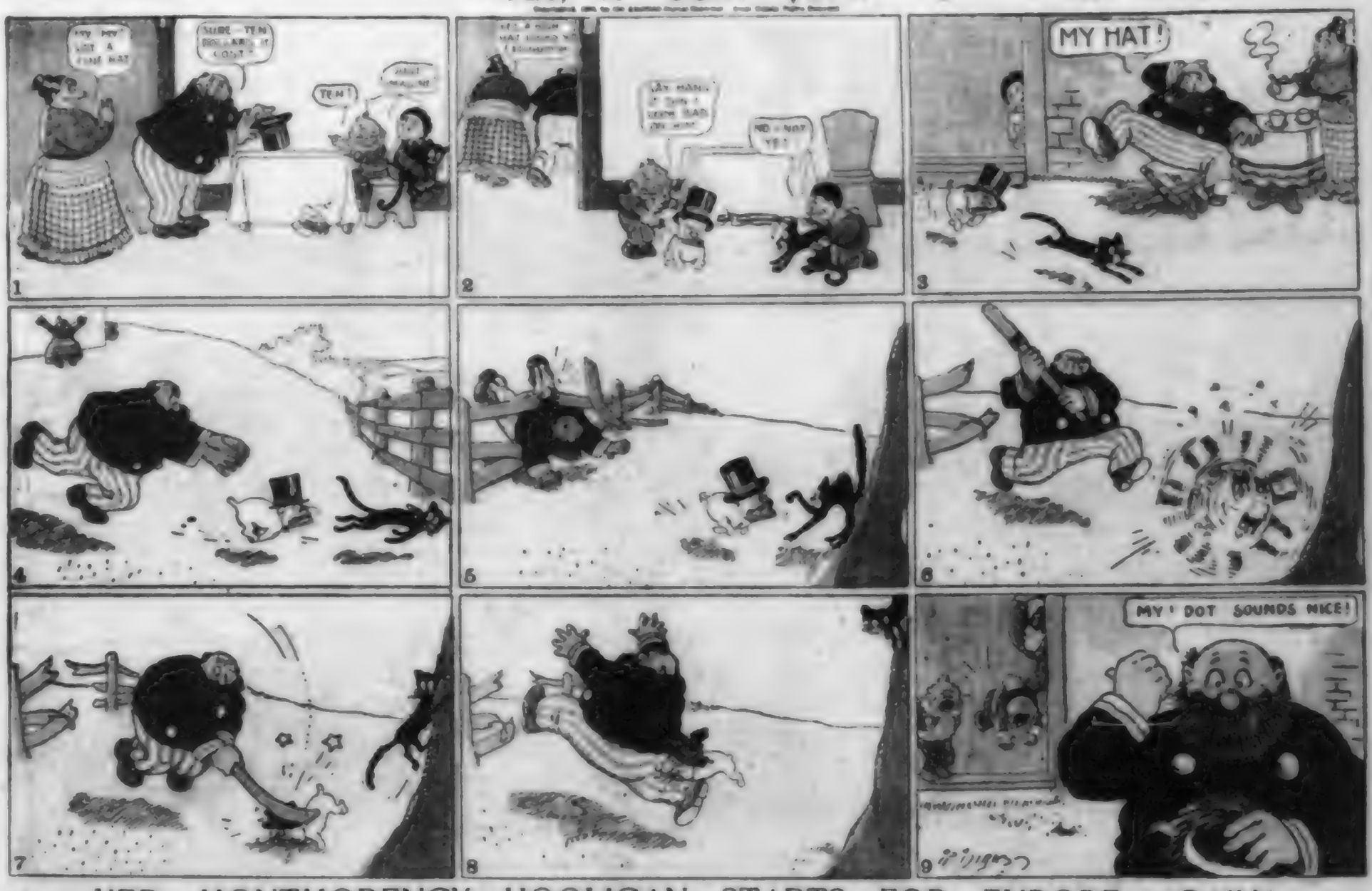
Chubb objected to the characters and the humor in the strips where the slums of New York City and the lives of the working class and immigrants were featured. These comics served as a chronicle of everyday life, exaggerated for emphasis.[8] The character who started it all, the Yellow Kid, was a bald-headed street urchin who occupied Hogan's Alley. His companions "frequently smoked, drank, and on occasion, tumbled from the windows of their tenement homes."[9] His dialogue, printed on the front of his nightshirt, was ungrammatical, to say the least.

The humor in early comics, like much of the humor of the period, was very physical. Roy McCardell, writing in 1905 about the early comic art, noted:

> Its humor is strenuous, not to say brutal; the knock-about comedians of the old-time music-halls might easily have posed for most of the pictures the supplement has printed in its ten years of life. The characters are thrown out of windows, clubbed, kicked, knocked down and out, laid flat by trunks dropped upon them; but they turn up smilingly the next Sunday to go through the same operations in other forms.[10]

As Nystrom notes in her analysis, because these early strips were direct-

YES, IT COST $10!



YEP, MONTMORENCY HOOLIGAN STARTS FOR EUROPE AGAIN!

Happy and Gloomy Gus Bid Him Good Bye

GOOD BYE BOYS — I'M OFF AT LAST
I FEEL SEASICK ALREADY
HAVE A CUP OF HOT BOUILLON SIR
I FEEL WORSE
DON'T FORGET TO WRITE
I'LL CABLE YOU AS SOON AS I ARRIVE
ASSASSIN!
MONTY'S OVERBOARD
AW WE CAN'T LOSE HIM
AND THE DUKE IS EXPECTING ME IN LONDON
POOR MONTY
HOW CAN I EXPLAIN TO ME LONDON FRIENDS
YOUSE CAN TAKE DE NEXT BOAT
HES A SIGHT

ed at the working class, the most popular strips were critical of middle class values and manners. The emphasis in early strips on children and animals as characters "gave them the power to act in a counter-productive or anarchic manner not appropriate for adults." Such characters had great appeal to those who had little control over their lives.[11]

Chubb took matters into his own hands in 1911, organizing a meeting in the auditorium of the Ethical Culture Society. At that meeting, he read letters of support for his proposed League for the Improvement of the Children's Comic Supplement. The meeting also featured a number of speakers. Among them were Norman Hapgood, editor of *Collier's Weekly*, who suggested that supporting "the right kind of endeavor" rather than a more radical move to eliminate the supplement altogether was the appropriate action; Lillian Wald, of the Nurses' Settlement, who pointed out children ages five through twelve were especially susceptible to "instruction" from the pictorial Sunday supplement; and William Maxwell, superintendent of the public schools, who agreed that the work of the schools was being neutralized by the Sunday supplement.[12]

The League received a letter from the *New York World*, offering to turn over the newspaper's entire supplement on some Sunday to be illustrated and filled by the staff under the direction of the League. While it was a good public relations move for the *World*, there is no evidence the League ever followed up on the invitation.[13] The founding of the League was greeted with editorial enthusiasm by *The Outlook*, which praised Chubb's efforts by noting he "has rendered great service to the public in this connection" and concluded: "The League, under the leadership of Mr. Chubb, ought to have branches in every large city in the United States."[14] Despite the fanfare that greeted the formation of the League, there is no evidence that the League had any impact on comic supplements, and there is no further documentation of the League's activities. In fact, the greatest impact of the anti-supplement movement was felt four years earlier, when the *Boston Herald* announced it would drop its comic supplement. In a statement explaining the move, the *Herald* noted: "The comic supplement has had its day. We discard it as we would throw aside any mechanism that has reached the end of its usefulness, of any 'feature' that had ceased to fulfill the purpose of attraction." It concluded: "The colored comic supplement is the clown of the newspaper establishment. The Herald believes that a great newspaper no longer needs a clown."[15]

While some magazine editors announced that the newspaper's action marked the beginning of the end for the comics, the *Herald*'s announcement of the death of the comic strip was premature. A few prominent newspapers nationwide, including the *Milwaukee Journal*, the *Indianapolis Star* and the *New York Tribune*, did drop their supplements briefly, but all of them, including the *Boston Herald*, had reinstated comics by 1915.[16] Clearly, the reform efforts directed at the comics supplements were, by and large, a failure. That failure can be attributed to several factors.

First, the work of the League was no doubt affected by the fact that Chubb left New York in September 1911 to become leader of the Ethical Culture Society in St. Louis. Without his leadership, the League seems to have disbanded. Second, as Nystrom has pointed out, the overwhelming popularity and profitability of the comic supplement ensured its survival. Third, the growing concern about the involvement of the United States in world affairs and the country's entry into World War I put an end to the crusade and to the urban progressive movement itself. Fourth, the nature of the comic strips themselves changed, moving away from slap-stick humor to the narrative "continuity" strip. Finally, there was a shift to middle class themes, encouraged by the rise of syndicates, which removed the responsibility for the content of comic strips from individual newspapers.[17]

While the controversy over the comic strip was short-lived, the arguments put forth by its critics would be resurrected again with the introduction of each new form of popular entertainment—radio, television, and the comic book. ●

NOTES

1. Elsa Nystrom, "A Rejection of Order: The Development of the Newspaper Comic Strip in America, 1830-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola Univ. of Chicago, 1989), 163-167.

2. Percival Chubb, Box I, Archives of the Ethical Culture Society, New York, New York.

3. Howard B. Radest, *Toward a Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1969), 37, 120-132.

4. Radest, *Toward a Common Ground*, 42-43; Ethical Culture Society Catalog, "Ethical Culture Fieldston Schools" (New York: Ethical Culture Society, no date).

5. "The Vulgar Supplement Again," *The Outlook*, 5 June 1909, 307.

6. "Comic Supplements a Menace, He Says," *New York Times*, 10 June 1909, 7.

7. "Comic Supplements a Source of Evil," *New York Times*, 27 January 1911, p. 5.

8. Amos Stote, "Some Figures in the New Humor," *Bookman*, May 1910, 286.

9. Brian Walker, *The Sunday Funnies* (Bridgeport, CT: The Barnum Museum, 1994).

10. Roy McCardell, "Opper, Outcault and Company: The Comic Supplement and the Men who Made It," with annotations by Robert C. Harvey, *Inks* 2 (May 1995): 3.

11. Nystrom, "A Rejection of Order," 110-112, 132.

12. "Comic Supplements Publicly Denounced," *New York Times*, 7 April 1911, p. 4, col. 5.

13. "Make 'Comics' Educational," *Survey*, 15 April 1911, 103.

14. "The Comic Supplement," *The Outlook*, 15 April 1911, 802.

15. Reprinted in "Sounding the Doom of the 'Comics,'" *Current Literature*, December 1908, 630-33.

16. Nystrom, "A Rejection of Order," 23-24.

17. David Frederick McCord, "The Social Rise of the Comics," *The American Mercury*, July 1935, 363-64; Nystrom, "A Rejection of Order," 186-194, 201-202.

book reviews

The Yellow Kid

by Richard Felton Outcault

Introduction by Bill Blackbeard

Reviewed by Richard D. Olson

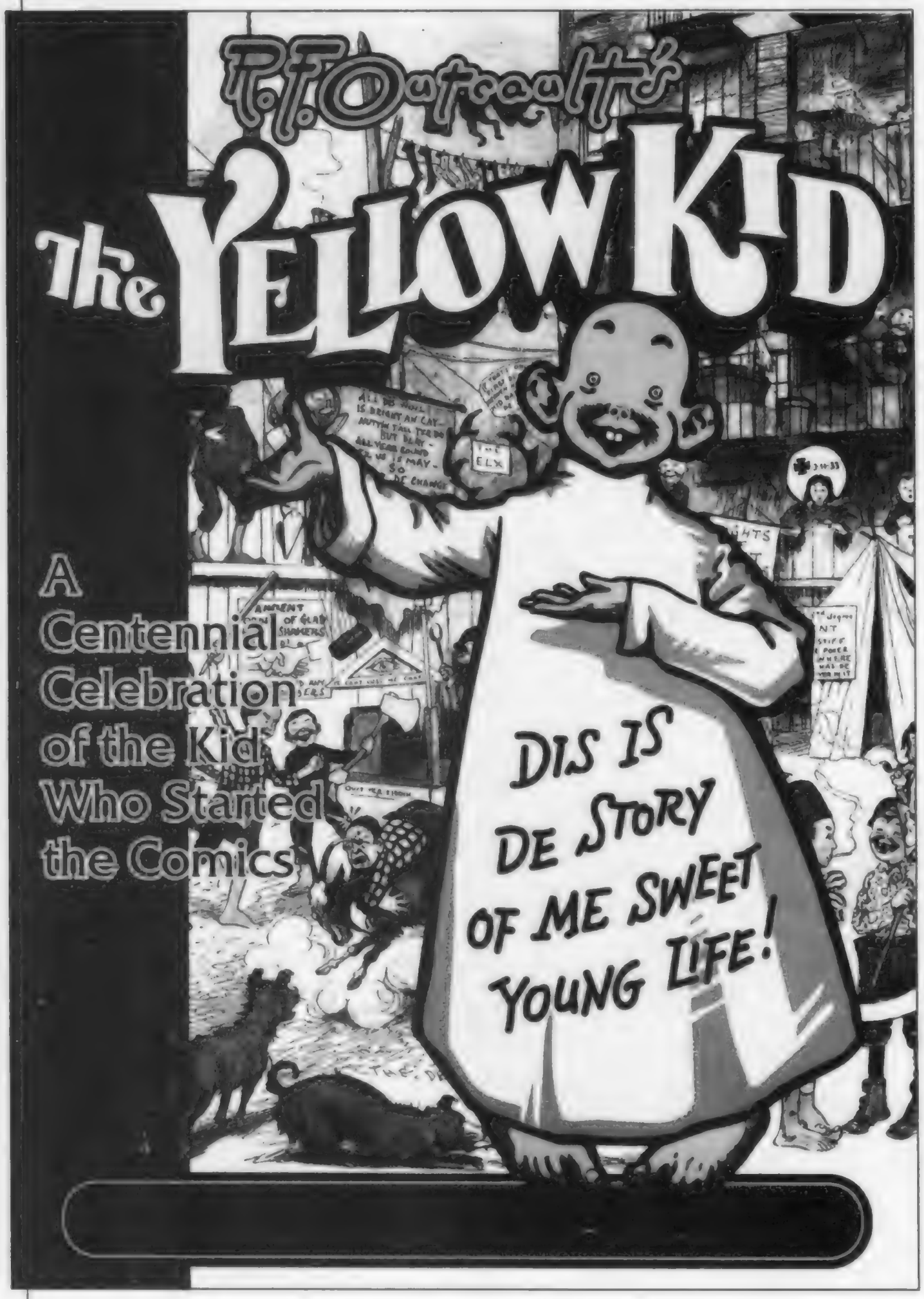
One hundred years ago on 17 February 1895, R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid made his first newspaper appearance in the comics of the *New York World*. Today, a century later, all of those extremely rare comics from the different newspapers that published the Yellow Kid have been collected and printed in a single volume. Everyone interested in the birth of the American comics has to be grateful. To have high-quality, color reproductions of these pages from the only known, surviving collection is a dream come true.

The value of the collected pages not withstanding, however, the appeal of the bok is diminished because it seems to suffer from an identity crisis. Is it a "coffee table" book or a work of scholarship? Most comic strip reprint books have introductions of five to twenty-five pages followed by the reproductions. This book has a 146-page introduction, so the author clearly intends it to be something special.

This dilemma seems to result in two general problems. The first involves issues related to the physical production of the volume. For example, Outcault's early black and white cartoons are reproduced so small that the art is difficult to appreciate and the captions are nearly impossible to read. This could have been solved by at least three alternatives: making them larger in their same relative positions; placing them in the much larger spaces allocated to the numerous period photographs by Jacob Riis and others; or using two columns of text on each page and running the cartoons and photographs at either single or double-column width. I would have preferred the last as it would also have eliminated the unusually large margins that make me think of wasted space rather than luxury.

Another example of the book's design problem is the identification of illustrations and plates in the text by date rather than number, which makes it very difficult to pair the text with the appropriate image, especially when it is not clear if the image is an illustration or a plate. It would have been so simple to number all images sequentially, and use those numbers for references. Still another example involves the human errors of typos, placing pages out of temporal sequence, and using the same illustration twice; for example, illustrations #73 on page 121 and #75 on page 122 are identical, thus omitting the illustration for 16 April 1898 and using the one for 19 April 1898 twice. The physical problems are a nuisance—I wish they did not exist—but they do not represent fatal flaws and they do not prevent me from enjoying the book.

The second general problem area is Bill Blackbeard's introduction, which in my view, does contain fatal flaws. My guess is that the problems revolved around the fact that Blackbeard clearly wants to be regarded as a serious scholar, even though he does not want to engage in serious scholarship. He generally fails to cite any sources for facts or opinions. He ignores Rick Marschall's view of the origin of the yellow nightshirt (see Marschall's 1989 volume, *America's Great Comic Strip Artists*, 22) and implies his own ideas printed in 1995 represent an original analysis. He designates the 25 October 1896 Yellow Kid comic strip, "The Yellow Kid and His New Phonograph," as the first example of a comic strip in the world; and it might be, if you accept Blackbeard's list of requirements in order to call newspaper panels comic strips. Given that different authors have dif-


R.F. Outcault's
The YELLOW KID
A Centennial Celebration of the Kid Who Started the Comics
DIS IS DE STORY OF ME SWEET YOUNG LIFE!

ferent lists, however, it seems a little presumptuous to be so unwavering about this designation. It was certainly an important developmental stage in the history of the comic strip, but the example typifies Blackbeard's inability to let his readers know the difference between a fact and an opinion. He states that "The name *McFadden's Flats* appeared only in the *Journal* and in the title of Outcault's and Townsend's collaborative book based on the Sunday panels, *The Yellow Kid in McFadden's Flats*" (102-103). There is absolutely no question, however, that the name was also used in musicals and advertising material (e.g., blotters, posters) for some of the Yellow Kid musicals, the most famous being *McFadden's Row of Flats*. Blackbeard also contradicts himself occasionally. For instance, he states, "*The World* . . . published the nation's first comic supplement in color newsprint on May 21, 1893" (23), but nine pages later we read, "The printing of color cartoons in newspapers was not initiated by the *World*" (32).

The *coup de grace*, however, occurs when he states, "One of them, editor Ervin Wardman of the *New York Press*, garnered the plaudits of his fellows by coining the term 'yellow journalism' in an editorial blast leveled at the *Journal* on September 2, 1896" (59). Because of the significance of this quote in fixing the first use of the term, "yellow journalism," at a much earlier point in time than previously believed, and because his statement was contrary to that found in classic biographies of Pulitzer (e.g., Seitz, 231) and Hearst (e.g., Swanberg, 82) as well as recent journal articles (e.g., Winchester, *Inks* 3:2), I obtained the New York Public Library microfilm of the *New York Press* to read the editorial and to review the period before and after the date in question to gain a better appreciation of what was occurring. You can imagine my surprise when I could not find the editorial or the term "yellow journalism" in the 2 September 1896 issue. Eventually I read all of the issues on the microfilm from August through October, but still could not find the term "yellow journalism." The closest I came was in the 22 September 1896 issue when the editorial blasted Hearst for indulging in the "new journalism." I discussed this problem with Blackbeard, and while he told me he did not have a copy of the editorial either, he did remind me that the paper was typically published in several editions throughout the day with changing contents and that the quote must have been in a different edition than the one that had been microfilmed. In addition, he told me that Will Irwin had written a series on the newspaper in *Collier's* in 1911 that further supported his claim. I also read Irwin's series carefully and found that while Irwin mentioned that the techniques of yellow journalism were in use before the Yellow Kid was created, they were not termed yellow journalism until the Yellow Kid wars in New York gave those sensational devices a name. I think it speaks to Blackbeard's scholarship to make such significant

statements without having any confirmation of the former and a misunderstanding of the latter. In my view, these types of problems in the introduction are much more troubling than the relatively minor physical problems.

Bill Blackbeard has spent a lifetime assembling the finest collection of newspaper comics known to exist, and it is wonderful that everyone is now getting a chance to enjoy this portion of them. It is a shame that the publication of the Yellow Kid pages, a unique collection, had to be marred by so many physical and narrative problems. Still, the pages stand by themselves, and I would recommend that all readers add *The Yellow Kid* to their libraries. ●

Outcault, Richard Felton. *The Yellow Kid.* Kitchen Sink Press. 1995. 301 p. ISBN 0-87816-380-8, hdb. $55.00; ISBN 0-8-7816-379-4 pap. $39.95

The Art of the Comic Book : An Aesthetic History

by Robert C. Harvey

Reviewed by Randall W. Scott

After the panoramic and colorful review provided by Ron Goulart's *Over 50 Years of American Comic Books* (Mallard Press, 1991), and the insightful anatomy of the art by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics* (Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), what is next? It is time to combine the two approaches and work on the "aesthetic history" of the comic book medium. Robert C. Harvey's *The Art of the Comic Book* is more than stories of the people and circumstances of the comic book industry and examples of the sophisticated techniques that McCloud has primed readers to notice. Harvey shows, in meticulous and convincing detail, the basis for the reputations of Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, Gil Kane and Harvey Kurtzman, all the while weaving in enough of the medium's past to provide the context of these close readings. Harvey's history is not as broad or inclusive as Goulart's, and the aesthetic he uses is not based on any artifact from McCloud's book. This is clearly a third kind of investigation, and the next book on comic books will have to stand on the shoulders of all three.

The Art of the Comic Book is a well-focused book that is a strong contribution to the field of comic art studies. Harvey establishes four elements of comics art (breakdown, composition, layout and style) at the beginning, and returns to them for his critical vocabulary throughout. His aesthetic rule-of-thumb, that the best comics blend words and pictures so completely that neither half even makes sense without the other, is applied diffidently but consistently. This blending principle is an add-on to other criteria that might apply depending upon genre, so that sensitive characterization and accurate figure drawing might be what the critic should address based on a literary or artistic comparison, but the balance and interplay of the two are what must be addressed if we want to criticize comic books as comics.

Harvey is at his best when giving his perceptive readings of comic book pages. Kirby, Eisner, Kane and Kurtzman get chapter-length treatments, but there is also significant commentary on work by Marshall Rogers, Joe Shuster, Frederic Ray, Carl Pfeufer, Bob Powell, Neal Adams, Howard Chaykin, Frank Miller, George Perez, Walt Simonson, and others. The method used is not new, because most of the framing ideas of this book were spelled out by Harvey in his 1979 essay, "The Aesthetics of the Comic Strip" (*Journal of Popular Culture* XII:4, 640-652), and substantial portions of some of the chapters have seen print before in *Comics Journal*. But here, finally, is an extended understanding of comics that does not invite us into the tailspin of arguing high versus low culture, that can point to a flaw without condescending, and that can praise a piece of work without making us wonder if we are missing something. The implication is that there are volumes and volumes still to be discovered and written, and here is a straightforward way to get started on the project. McCloud's *Understanding Comics* gives a nice map of the area, but does not suggest any destinations. Harvey is sending back picture postcards that should make you want to pack your bags.

Curiously, there is one chapter in *The Art of the Comic Book* that does not seem to belong in this book, and actually seems like it might be the basis for another. Chapter 9, subtitled "autobiographical angst and other adventures in topics and treatments," is so miscellaneous that it should be read separately from the rest of the book, on a different weekend. While the chapter is certainly a contribution to our understanding of R. Crumb and some other autobiographical and outside-the-mainstream creators, it includes segments on Steve Gerber and Scott McCloud that are extraneous even in a chapter as structureless as this. The four elements and the "blending" criterion are pretty much abandoned in favor of a more traditional thematic and cultural discussion. Like a high school history course where the teacher realizes in the last week of class that World War I to the present needs to be covered,

Cover illustration by Robert Harvey

the syllabus breaks down. Please note that this discomfort with chapter 9 does not extend to matters of fact. This is an aesthetic *history*, and the names, dates, and bibliographical references given throughout this book are excellent.

The book has a competent index, which elevates it to the status of something we librarians can use to help answer reference questions, but beware: There is a fine chapter on western comics in the book, but the word "western" does not occur in the index. There are a few other such lapses, mainly for conceptual or generic terms that are well introduced and worth returning to. "Superhero" is one such term, and "narrative breakdown" is another. This reviewer recommends annotating the index as you read. Though there are good bibliographic endnotes, a bibliography compiling the works in some simple arrangement would have been useful. A university press should pay attention to this sort of detail.

This is a groundbreaking book that contributes mightily to understanding of the comic book's history, and proposes a methodology for understanding of the medium. ●

Robert C. Harvey. *The Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History.* University Press of Mississippi, 1996. 288 p. index. ISBN 0-87805-757-9 cloth $45.00; ISBN 0-87805-758-7 paper $19.95

Arab Comic Strips: Politics of an Emerging Mass Culture

by Allen Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas

Reviewed by Sabra J. Webber

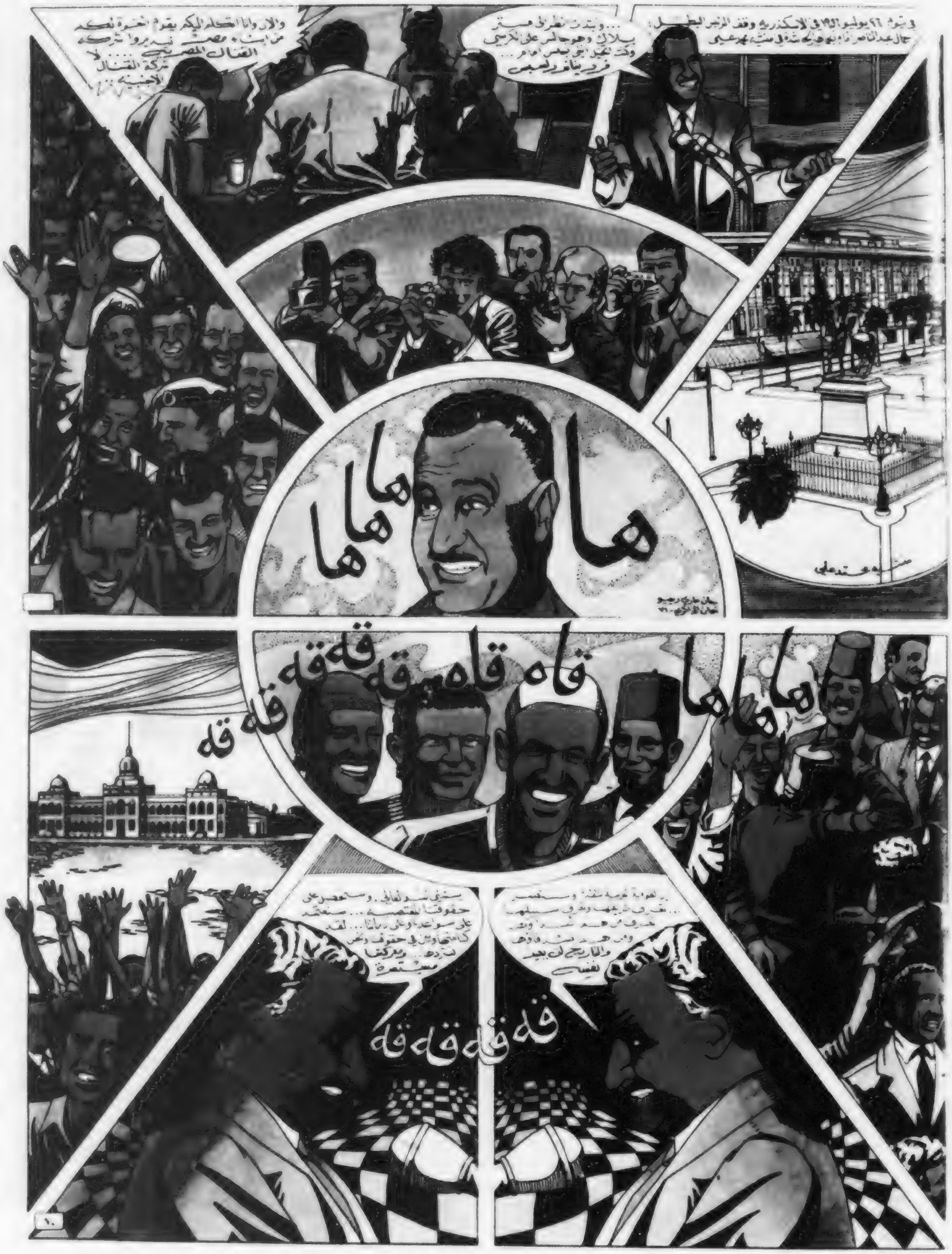
Arab Comic Strips surveys and evaluates Arab comic strips (not always in Arabic), often written for children, but always with an eye to a more sophisticated and political audience. The book is well-illustrated with examples of all of the cartoons mentioned. There are nine full-color pages and more than twenty examples in black and white. Most of the illustrations are placed so that they are easily consulted as they are discussed.

A general introduction briefly compares Arab comics with those of Europe and the United States both in terms of subject matter and form, with a nod toward the cartoonist's historical role as commentator on and critic of the status quo. (Here, I think the power, significance, and scope of North American comics is somewhat underestimated.) Next are chapters on comics from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria and France (the Beur, or Maghribian Arab-French). As they move through discussions of specific comics of the several countries, the authors address certain recurrent foci (heroes like Nasser, the past, the daily life of children or adults, gender issues, religious stories, life-in-exile and, throughout, politics) and various artistic styles, as these foci and styles inform or are informed by western comics, the need to educate, the situation of diglossia, bilingualism and the requirements of the medium itself. Thus consideration of any particular comic series allows the authors and the readers to move back and forth among the chapters drawing comparisons that do not depend on a linear consideration of any particular series, country, or topic alone. Since some comics are collaborations among artists or publishers of two or more nationalities, the questions of technique, philosophy and production are quite intriguing.

Not surprisingly, the analyses of strip series vary in their emphases on content or form, the verbal or the visual. Despite the wonderful examination of word play in the Beur cartoons, Douglas' and Malti-Douglas' discussion of the "biography in comic-strip form" of Nasser (created by J. M. Ruffieux and Muhammad Nu'mân-al-Dhâkirî and others) is perhaps the richest in terms of providing insights into the possibilities for the strip medium. The placement of medallions encircled by frames of various shapes and sizes, text sometimes spilling over to link frames in yet another way, echoing of landmarks or people from frame to frame (and the very placement of people and landmarks within a frame) demonstrate well the special communicative strengths of the art form. By clever placement of words (in literary Arabic or dialect) and images, the artist is able to evoke with a light touch a positive, intimate image of Nasser, despite the fact that two out of four of these high-density cartoon pages represent defeats for Nasser (and a third represents his death).

Between the sincerity of the Nasser strips and the heavy handed, albeit amusing, sarcasm of the Beur strips, there are a number of strips (the Iraqi strips about Saddam Hussein, for example) that I found murkier, more packed with possibilities for multiple readings than the authors seem to have. Furthermore, I have to wonder—although the authors talk mainly about the strips as a Western innovation (adapted creatively to Arab-world use)—whether there is not an echo, both in form and in function, to the shadow puppet plays once so popular in the Arab world.

The authors, both professors of



A page from *Jamâl 'Abd al-Nâsir* by Muhammad Nu'mân al-Dhâkirî et al.
Paris: Manshûrât al-Sihâfa al-Ifrî-qiyya al-Mushtaraka, 1973.

semiotics with a long-time fascination with the Arab comic strip, provide enough data and open-endedness that one is quickly drawn into the interpretive project with them, although I would recommend starting with chapter three and reading the first two chapters last. ●

Douglas, Allen, and Fedwa Malti-Douglas. *Arab Comic Strips: Politcs of an Emerging Mass Culture.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 1994. 263 p. ISBN 0-253-31814-9 hbk. $39.95; ISBN 0-253-20831-9 pap. $19.95

Comic Books and Comic Strips in the United States: An International Bibliography

Compiled by John A. Lent

Reviewed by Robert C. Harvey

One of a series of bibliographies on comics published by Greenwood Press, this is a watershed work. Any future bibliographic efforts in indexing articles and books about comic strips and comic books in the United States must build on this one.

It is easy to find fault with an index, particularly one as gargantuan as John Lent's. Just unearth one article that's been left out and a single typographic error and the work seems flawed beyond usefulness. This book has flaws, but they scarcely render it useless. None of the items are annotated, for instance, so their placement within the book's descriptive categories is crucial. A researcher who finds an article of mine called "A Look at Battle Scenes in Comics" in the comic book section under "War Comics" will be disappointed to discover that the article is about fight sequences in superhero comics—but there are seventeen other articles listed in this section, and all of them are clearly about comic books featuring war and soldiers on the battlefield. The lesson here is for authors, who should title their work with descriptive precision.

Lent concentrated on the literature produced in the last twenty years (that is, on the period most fecund with articles on the medium), but he also mined *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* from 1890 to 1992 and, I gather, every other fugitive source he could discover, and he also interviewed other scholars and many cartoonists. Inevitably, however, some things have been overlooked. I do not find John Kobler's 1941 *Saturday Evening Post* article on the birth and subsequent success of Superman (probably the first national notice of the impact of the character on publishing and on reading habits). Nor is Bob Abel's piece on Walt Kelly (an insightful glimpse of the cartoonist's personality and motives) from the October 1966 issue of *True* indexed here. But there are 139 articles on Superman in the list, the oldest published in 1939; the most recent, 1993. And there are 130 articles on Walt Kelly and *Pogo*. Only Charles Schulz and *Peanuts*, with a combined total of 139 citations, are more frequently cited. Milton Caniff and his three comic strip creations, *Dickie Dare*, *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*, tie the Kelly tally, but no one else comes close. Considering the vast and uneven terrain Lent traverses here, it is not remarkable that he misses a few turns; what is remarkable is that he has been able to recover so much that would otherwise be lost in the labyrinths of other, less specialized, reference works.

If you look for oddities and errors, you will find them. Syndicated newspaper caroonist J. R. Williams, who launched his folksy *Out Our Way* panel cartoon in 1922, is lumped in with the contemporary comic book artist of the same name and all the articles about both are indexed in the comic book section. Articles about the Al Capp creation *Long Sam* (drawn by Bob Lubbers) are listed under "Li'l Abner." An article about how *The Gumps* strip is surviving after the death of its creator, Sidney Smith, is cited under "Sidney Smith" rather than "The Gumps." In the comic book section devoted to the Silver Age is an article entitled "Before the Silver Age." "Part Two" of an interview with comic book artist Murphy Anderson is indexed, but "Part One" is missing. And in citing *Cartoonist PROfiles*, a journal that is numbered consecutively as well as dated by quarterly issue, the issue number is sometimes given; sometimes not.

But none of these inadvertencies amounts to anything when piled up against the monumental achievement that this bibliography represents.

The book lists 8,341 articles and books on the comic strip and the comic book. The citations are grouped in reasonably determined categories. Chapter One lists articles and works that deal generally with comics and comic books under such headings as artistic aspects, collecting, education and culture, violence controversy, war, social relevancy, and so forth. Chapter Two focuses on comic books, listing items in such categories as general studies, historical aspects, genres, and the creators of comics and their works. The final chapter does the same with comic strips and their cartoonists.

In searching for biographical information on, for instance, George Herriman, one consults Chapter Three under both the cartoonist's name and the name of his most celebrated creation, *Krazy Kat*, because biographical details are often found in articles on his comic strip. Cross referencing would have needlessly complicated the accessibility of the book.

Lent's criteria for a separate listing for a cartoonist or work is that the subject be cited at least twice in the book. Otherwise, the article is filed

under a generic heading. Some of Lent's selections are inherently frustrating and therefore baffling. An unpublished bibliography by Leonard Rifas is cited, but I would not know where to get my hands on it (except that I have Rifas' address, but who else does?). But Lent considered everything he ran across, believing, correctly, I think, that "no item was too small or insignificant to be listed" and that "both systematically-researched and ephemeral materials are useful during the course of developing a field of study." Still, he left some things out if they were too difficult to find or because (in the case, say, of individual issues of comic books) the volume of material was simply too great.

Apart from the categorical organization of the book, there are two other finding aids: indexes by author and by subject, which refer the searcher back to the body of the work by means of consecutive item numbers for each entry. The entire enterprise is both logical and eminently useful, a valuable addition to the growing library on the subject. It is also a milestone in the life of a dedicated and persistent scholar of the comics, who has spent three decades keeping abreast of the literature.

The book's aperitifs are themselves informative and useful. Mort Walker contributes a Foreword that quickly traces the changes in comic strips over the last century. Jerry Robinson's introduction is, for its brevity, a notably perceptive and comprehensive treatment of the history of comic strips and comic books. I can do no more here than quote in agreement his last sentence, which is about the book he ably prefaces: "Anyone who writes, draws, studies, reads, enjoys and loves the comics is in Lent's debt." ●

Lent, John A. *Comic Books and Comic Strips in the United States: An International Bibliography.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1994. 525 p. indexes. ISBN 0-313-28211-0 hdb. $85.00

The Comic Strip Century

by Bill Blackbeard and Dale Crain

Reviewed by Allan Holtz

To the delight of comic strip lovers, recent years have seen a number of good reprints of great material of the past. *Little Nemo, Polly And Her Pals, Wash Tubbs, Li'l Abner* and many others have seen the light of day once more, often printed in high quality editions. What is even more astounding is that some seemingly less commercial material has found its way back onto the printed page. What a wonderful treat to see reprint books of the *Yellow Kid/Hogan's Alley* material, Feininger's *Wee Willie Winkie*, and other strips that would not, presumably, be hot sellers at the bookstore.

Years before the abundance of reprint books was upon us, back when only a few strips had been reprinted in any kind of serious manner, the publication of *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* (Smithsonian Institution Press; Harry N. Abrams: 1977), was a revelation. Bill Blackbeard, director of the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art and caretaker of the most nearly complete collection of comic strip tear sheets in the world, and Smithsonian staffer Martin Williams gave a new generation a glimpse at the length and breadth of comic strip history. This book provided many with their first exposure to the classics of comic strip art—*Krazy Kat, Flash Gordon, Barney Google* and many more. In addition, we got a glimpse at rare and practically forgotten gems like *Old Doc Yak, Merely Margie* and *Hairbreadth Harry.* It was a peek into an astounding world of graphic delights, and was part of the impetus for a whole new generation of readers to get excited about comic strips. These same readers help to make today's high-quality reprints feasible. If it were not for *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* whetting their appetite, the potential readership for a complete reprinting of *Little Nemo In Slumberland*, might have been so small as to make the notion of undertaking such a publish-

Blondie by Chic Young, 25 January 1933

23
AND WE DON'T MEAN SKIDOO!
TODAY IS THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF DAGWOOD'S HUNGER STRIKE!
1-25
ARE THESE REALLY STUFFED TURKEYS?
SURE, NOW I SHOW YOU ZE VAT'S OF ZE CRANBERRY SAUCE
IF IT ISN'T RAINING BAKED APPLES IT'S RAINING HAMBURGER SANDWICHES
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ing project seem ludicrous.

With this book, Kitchen Sink Press offers what is essentially *The Smithsonian Collection of Comic Strips* revisited. *The Comic Strip Century*, edited by Blackbeard and Dale Crain, follows the same basic format of presenting one or two examples of selected strips, plus some longer sequences of a few titles. If the Smithsonian book was wonderful, then it would seem that *The Comic Strip Century* should be greeted by nothing but accolades as well. But is another book that treads the same path necessary? Perhaps not necessary, but certainly welcome, if the new book improves on the original. Thus comparison is in order: First of all and without a doubt the most striking improvement is the quality of reproduction. Slick paper and better, one might even say extravagant, production values reproduce the strips in absolute faith to their original printed counterparts. Not that the reproduction in the Smithsonian book is bad, but in *The Comic Book Century* you can almost smell the old paper. On the down side, those production values would have been more easily enjoyed had the 11" x 14" format of the Smithsonian book been used. *The Comic Strip Century* measures 9" x 12" and the legibility of the captions in some strips suffers as a result. While none of the strips are impossible to read, wordy strips like *The Gumps* will have the average reader squinting. The price of the two-volume set (a whopping $80) should have made such economies unnecessary.

Another possible improvement is in the number of strips covered—on a purely numerical basis, *The Comic Strip Century* has the Smithsonian book beat by a comfortable margin—185 different strip titles in the former compared to 114 in the latter. However, how many of these strips are readily available today in reprint books of their own? While there is nothing wrong with doing an overview of the form, the natural inclination would seem to be to show off strips that cannot be found elsewhere. Co-editor Dale Crain would seem to agree. From the foreword:

> If there was a philosophy to our overall approach . . . it was to provide as diverse a selection of comic strips as possible. Fortunately, in recent years many classic comic strips have been collected either in whole or in part. Therefore, those who might not agree with our choice to include only a handful of pages from *Terry and the Pirates*, for one example, are heartily encouraged to seek out the entire series of books reprinting the complete run of that strip.

Unfortunately, Crain and Blackbeard have not adhered to this principle very well. *Captain Easy* rates seventeen pages, *Little Orphan Annie* gets ten, *Li'l Abner* six, *Tarzan* seven, and so on. Many classic strips that have never been reprinted in any form get a single page or are omitted entirely. A few of those unaccounted for are *Dolly Dimples, Sam's Strip, Aladdin Junior, Billy the Boy Artist, Big Chief Wahoo, Boots and Her Buddies, Dixie Dugan, King Aroo, Lance, Freckles and His Friends, Harold Teen, Kerry Drake, Apple Mary/Mary Worth, Rusty Riley, S'Matter, Pop?, The Timid Soul* and *Whiteboy*. Naturally, no collection can be all-encompassing, but why are the oft-reprinted strips taking up so much space that could have been handed over to the strips that seldom if ever get reprinted?

Once we get past title selections, the individual strips chosen to illustrate them run the gamut from inspired to bizarre. On the inspired end of the spectrum, we get the Sunday page where Old Doc Yak buys Number 348, plus the final Sunday where he sells it to the Gumps. The complete hunger strike sequence from *Blondie*, the first three weeks of *Joe Palooka* dailies, and a self-portrait of George Herriman at the drawing board in *Embarrassing Moments* are also included. On the other hand, some selections are just plain strange, especially considering the cornucopia of choices available to Bill Blackbeard at the Academy. Why, for instance, is there only a single *Buster Brown* page, and that from 1915—the waning days of the strip's life? Why was a *Billy Bounce* strip by Kahles chosen, when W. W. Denslow created it? Why were rather pedestrian Sundays chosen for *Polly and Her Pals* and *Mamma's Angel Child*, when both are remembered specifically for their graphic inventiveness? How did they manage to find two *Smokey Stover* pages that never use Holman's trademark terms, "1506 nix nix" and "notary sojac"? Why was a one-color *Bobby Make-Believe* page chosen rather than full color? Why choose a *Doonesbury* page that does not include Mike, B.D., or Zonker?

Of course, many of these questions would not occur to the uninformed reader, and that raises a final point of comparison between the Smithsonian book and *The Comic Strip Century*. The Smithsonian book included capsule histories of each

HERE WE COME! THE PARADE OF THE DESSERTS
WON'T SOMEBODY PLEASE EAT US?
I'VE GIVEN UP ALL HOPE FOR HIM--THERE'S NO USE OF ME REMAINING HERE ANY LONGER
WHAT A PITY!
WHAT A CHUMP!
WAITER, ROLL IN ANOTHER BARREL OF MUSTARD FOR THESE HOT-DOGS!
CHIC YOUNG

reprinted strip as well as a short general history of the comic strip form. *The Comic Strip Century* continues only part of this tradition with three short essays on various eras of comic strip history, as well as a longer piece titled "Precursors To The Comics," all of which are well worth reading. There is, however, no information given about the specific comic strips in this book except on the occasions where they happen to be mentioned in the general history section. The printed strips would be more interesting to most any reader with a little background information about creators like Gustave Verbeck, Harry Hershfield, and Ed Wheelan, or comic strips like *Abie The Agent* and *Bunky*. Strips in this book are displayed in a complete vacuum, with no historical perspective and no plot outline. When the typical reader finds a half page of *The Fineheimer Twins* by Knerr, for instance, there is going to be some confusion. Why in the world would the editors include this blatant rip-off of *The Katzenjammer Kids*? Perhaps it was a precursor to Dirks' strip? The reader will never know the fascinating story based on a reading of *The Comic Strip Century*.

In his introduction, Bill Blackbeard says that *The Comic Strip Century* "is meant to serve as a rich lode of select illustration for any subsequent [book on comic strip] history" (9). Perhaps this indicates the reasoning behind the lack of exposition—that the book many are waiting for, Blackbeard's magnum opus on the history of comic strips, is forthcoming, and *The Comic Strip Century* is simply prelude. Or perhaps it is Blackbeard's nod to the reader that he too sees this work as incomplete. Most annoying about the lack of text is that Blackbeard would have undoubtedly had some interesting observations and historical footnotes. If Blackbeard had not been involved in the production, perhaps the loss would not seem so great.

Despite its flaws, *The Comic Strip Century* is nonetheless a lovely book, and it reproduces some wonderful material that may never otherwise be seen by most comic strip aficionados. It is doubtful, however, that any group will be completely happy with the book. The reader with advanced knowledge of comic strip history will likely be disappointed by the many worthy strips that have been passed over in favor of commonly available material, and the beginner will undoubtedly be confused and gain less enjoyment because of the lack of context and historical perspective. As successor to *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics*, *The Comic Strip Century* introduces more flaws than those it attempts to rectify, and that is a shame considering that another such collection will probably not be published for many years to come. ●

Blackbeard, Bill and Dale Crain, *The Comic Strip Century*. Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 1995. 2v. 480p. indexes. ISBN 3878163557. $80.00.

The Art of the New Yorker: 1925-1995

by Lee Lorenz

Reviewed by Shelley Armitage

Lee Lorenz's *The Art of the New Yorker*, 1925-1995, gives a personal, inside view of the workings of the magazine's art department. Written in a chatty style by the man who was art editor for *The New Yorker* from 1973 to 1993, the book provides a valuable history of the magazine and its artists, with considerable primary references gracefully integrated into the biographical text. I say "biographical" because Lorenz effectively chooses to retell the tale of the life of a magazine and the people and city who made it.

Unlike other coffee table books full of *The New Yorker* cartoons and illustrations which have lately been available, this book is a serious study of the necessarily collaborative nature of contract artists and the editorial staff, of illustration, cartoon, and text—the way in which the design and editorial intent of the magazine was fulfilled yet creatively tested from the beginning as a result of the incorporation of artistic work from outside the offices. Though Lorenz pleads his study as a mere toe in the water—an initial effort to collect and interpret the art and artists of *The New Yorker*—he manages a narrative both engaging and tantalizing as it raises questions about the reciprocity between the art world, individual artists, editorial taste-making, and the continuous way in which *The New Yorker* has provided an essential outlet for the work of some of America's most brilliant artists.

Lee Lorenz is particularly well-suited to tell this story. He attended Carnegie Tech and the Pratt Institute, first attempting cartoons in 1956. Successful initial publication in *Collier's* led to work for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, *Playboy*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Esquire*. His first contract with *The New Yorker* was in 1958, and he later became its art editor. He is currently the cartoon editor. These experiences have given him intimate knowledge of the day-by-day operation of the magazine during several major periods of its history. His

other interests—cornet playing for the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band, and the publication of several children's books—make him the essential analyst of *The New Yorker*, someone who appreciates various means of cultural expression.

It is in this area that the book excels. As a personal history, *The Art of the New Yorker* surpasses the many collections of anniversary issues and *The New Yorker* cartoon collections, beginning with the first published in 1928. The general lack of critical interpretation is known to anyone working in the field of humor, cartoon art, or magazine history. Though previous volumes significantly conserve visual materials, they do not interpret them. Admitting that individual artists and aspects of the magazine's history deserve a separate study, he clarifies his position of his study: "My hope is that this initial effort will provide a useful armature for more comprehensive work to come" (viii). According to the author, the book was conceived to interest students of "popular journalism, social critics, art historians, and analysts of twentieth-century American humor" (viii). Since the book is built on the notes, letters, and memos filed in *The New Yorker* archives at the New York Public Library, Lorenz brings us important contemporary information about the day-by-day operation of the magazine itself. He tells us, for instance, that in 1943, editor Harold Ross produced during an eight-day period three communiques to the accounting department trying to ascertain whether Saul Steinberg had received "a small overpayment" for two spot drawings (viii).

Such insights are given through an engaging, witty, and anecdotal narrative. Lorenz has chosen not to categorize or distinguish "periods" in *The New Yorker* history; hence, there are no chapter breaks, notes, or scholarly citations. Lorenz says, "It all begins with Ross," and in that declamation and its present tense we read a sum of *The New Yorker* vitality. Beginning with the trial and error of the early years, he documents how a tiny and changing staff tried to translate Ross's original vision for a sophisticated metropolitan weekly into reality. How the cartoons effected this vision, the fresh and challenging ways in which pictures commented on the world, the purpose and conception of the covers, the kinds and effect of interior art and how the art was chosen—these concerns reflect the growth and change of the magazine itself to the current day. Ingeniously, in requiring of the audience a seamless reading, Lorenz suggests how deeply entwined the art and various artists have been with the magazine's editorial aims and its long-term success.

Furthermore, the book is a study, in its content and layout, in the debate over the significance of the cartoon art to the overall effect and perspective of *The New Yorker*. *The Art of the New Yorker* is a work of word and image, so that the "story" of any period of *The New Yorker* is told visually as well as textually. For readers of various inclinations—cartoon buffs, collectors, scholars, popular readers—the book offers in its physical presentation an argument for the exceptional influence of cartoon art on the magazine. The way in which Lorenz tells his story—through collaborative design of word and image—points to an essential quality of *The New Yorker* itself: how the magazine could have never been or become the urbane vehicle it is without the intersection of visual and print components. We also learn, through a series of quite lengthy inset caption/texts, even more details of the origin and intent of individual cartoon examples.

That the art of *The New Yorker* was anything but illustrative adds as well to the continuing arguments about "value" of cartoons in other disciplines outside those who seriously study cartoons and illustrations. *The Art of the New Yorker* makes a statement from inside the magazine and graphic art professions about the primacy of cartoon art. Lorenz relates how the art, originally housed within the purveyance of the fiction department, quickly asserted its own importance so that by the late 1920s the "drawings did much to consolidate *The New Yorker*'s growing reputation for sophistication" (43). At any one time in the magazine's history, there were cartoonists whose intent was satire, style, gags, or simply buffoonery. Though it can be argued humor itself has changed in tone and style through the years, one is struck by how Roz Chast may be enjoyed as piquantly as Thurber. Yet another value of this book is how, by virtue of its long publication history, *The New Yorker* demonstrates shifts not merely in subject and theme, but in taste and attitude. A seventy-five year insight into what has made

Americans laugh at themselves is at the least a profound piece of cultural and social, if not psychological, history. Nevertheless, Lorenz emphasizes that in the case of the history of *The New Yorker* covers, "for most of the magazine's history, the covers were never meant to be more than amusing and pleasing to look at" (121). This kind of statement, well-documented by Lorenz, adds to the notion of "*The New Yorker*" humor: still connected to the "dementia praecox" school whether droll, absurd, or urbane, which according to scholars Ham Hill and Walter Blair, constitutes a vital vein of "American Humor."[1]

Lorenz seems, understandably, most comfortable when relating the period of his own history with *The New Yorker*, beginning with editor William Shawn in 1958. He gives us invaluable information about the relationship of staff to current events and readership, adding to the knowledge of the art profession itself. Overall, one of the most valuable aspects of *The Art of the New Yorker* is that it relates difficult to come by details about and insight into practical concerns of magazine employees and their connections to other personal and professional events.

If there is a short-coming of this type of book it is the difference between the intimate knowledge Lorenz possesses of the more contemporary period as compared to the earlier history he must recoup. Omission of visual illustrations of cartoonists such as John Held, Jr., though certainly not a major flaw, continue a kind of preference that has developed through years of citing only certain *The New Yorker* artists as important and exceptional. Though there is no doubt as to Thurber's and Arno's significance, for example, still other contributors, such as Held, fill in *The New Yorker* story at its completest. In fact, Held was asked by Ross to originate a style different from his (by then) anticipated flappers which set an identifying standard for other humor and popular magazines. Ross wanted Held to lend his established reputation to *The New Yorker* by ironically formulating a different look and form. Held's scratch-board look enabled him to continue the same social commentary inherent in the flapper/college joe cartoons, yet add to the experimentation that through time defined the brilliance of *The New Yorker* artists.

Lorenz's book was published to celebrate *The New Yorker*'s seventieth birthday and is sumptuously so with more than four hundred drawings and paintings, thirty-two pages of color, plus discussions of the full range of illustrative material—cartoons, covers, spots, illustrations, caricatures, and photographs. It is an essential book for everyone interested in the study of comic art, magazine history, or American art. Those looking to recapture how many of America's manners and morals were defined as well as reflected certainly should read and enjoy this book as well. ●

Lorenz, Lee. *The Art of the New Yorker, 1925-1995.* New York: Knopf. 1995. 200 p. index. ISBN 0-679-43679-0 hdb. $40.00.

NOTE

1. Hamlin Hill and Walter Blair, *America's Humor: From Poor Richard to Doonesbury* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Them Damned Pictures: Explorations in American Political Cartoon Art

by Roger A. Fischer

Reviewed by Bruce Wheltle

Roger A. Fischer delves into the nature and sources of cartoonists' imagery from the era of Thomas Nast to the cartoonists of our own era. In doing so, the author embarks on a quest to demonstrate how "political cartoon art in a democratic society has been one of the purest artifacts of popular culture, seeking to influence public opinion through its use of widely and instantly understood symbols . . . and allusions" (122). Fischer explores American political cartoon art in a series of ingeniously linked essays. Among his topics are the emergence of a popular culture from an undifferentiated elite culture during the first century of the American republic; nineteenth century cartooning based on racial, religious, and ethnic hatreds; a reassessment from the seemingly inexhaustible store of Nastiana; the iconography of twin deities of American cartooning, the Statue of Liberty and Abraham Lincoln; and twin devils of their political epochs, William M. "Boss" Tweed and Richard M. Nixon. Along the way Fischer serves up a scholarly smorgasbord that should inspire countless teachers at both secondary and college levels to draw upon primary visual source material in their presentations of American social life, past and present. He looks at the cartoon works in *Harper's Weekly*, *Puck*, and *Judge* with a fresh historical and visual viewpoint, and plays against them the works of their modern legatees, such as Paul Conrad, Draper Hill, Mike Peters, Steve Sack, and Steve Benson. Almost 120 cartoons are reproduced, roughly a third of them modern.

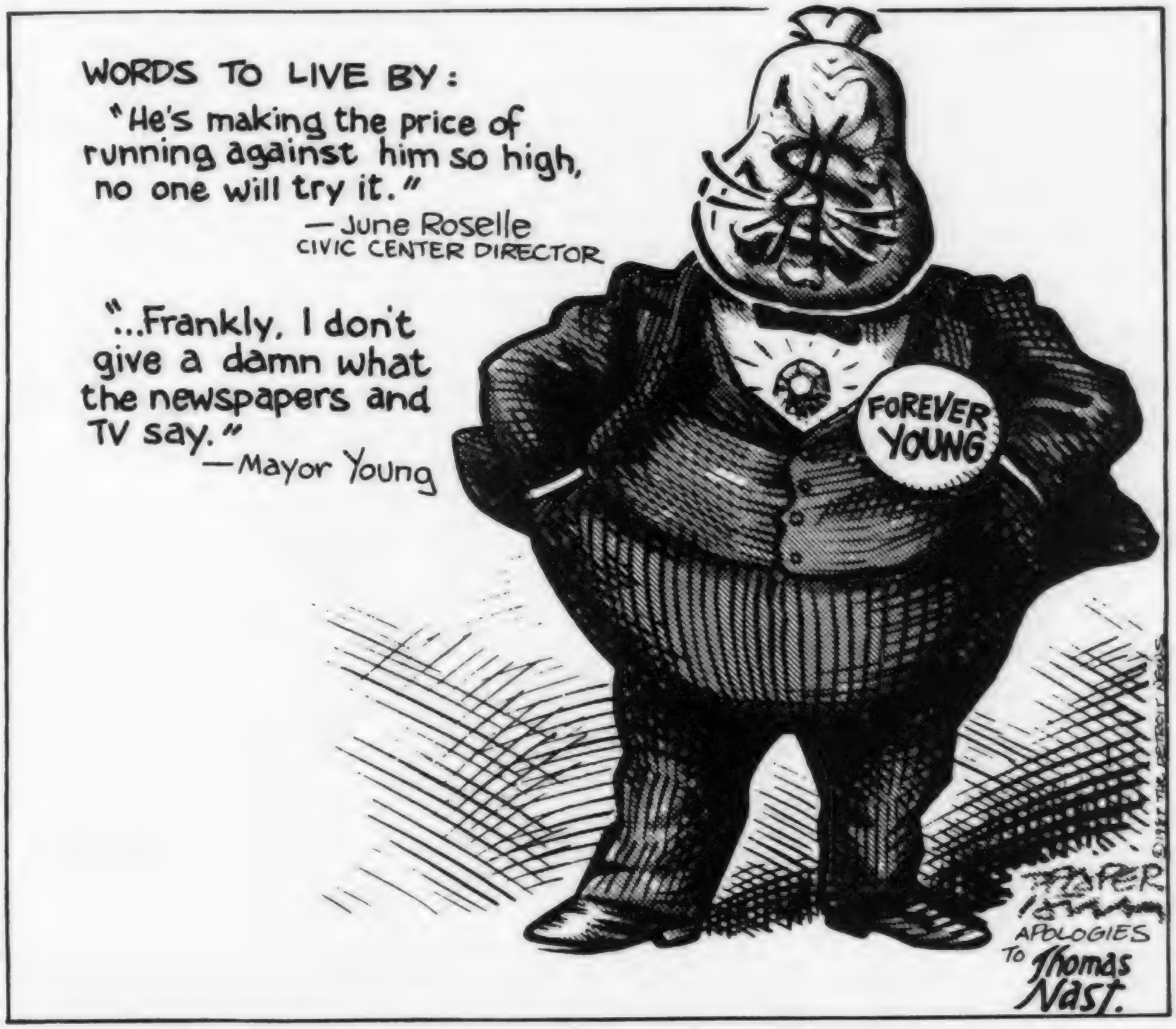
By beginning with the 1870-1890s and leaping to the 1970-1990s, Fischer reminds us that to be understood popular visual art must reflect the common culture of its readers He points out that cartoonists of both eras use references to current popular culture—in the nineteenth century it was P. T. Barnum's Circus, the "Swedish Nightingale" Jenny Lind, or

Uncle Tom's Cabin. In addition, however, the major nineteenth century cartoonists Thomas Nast, Joseph Keppler, and Bernhard Gillam freely used allusions to the Bible, classical literature, and Shakespeare because these works formed the core of their own and their readers' educations. One hundred years later, cartoonists only rarely refer to the classics, but instead rely upon the images of a shared contemporary television and film culture: Rambo and Disneyana have all but replaced Hercules and Hamlet as elements of common experience.

Fischer also explores a less researched and less admirable aspect of nineteenth century shared culture: the broad acceptance of ethnic and racial prejudice as reflected in visual stereotype. Two chapters, "Aliens" (primarily "comical black Americans, the shanty Irish, and coarsely conniving Jewish Shylocks") and those "Better Dead Than Red" (Native Americans, of course), explore the virulent promotion of hatred of minority groups in the land of opportunity. As Fischer observes, the frequently highminded editorial sentiments of *Puck* and *Judge* stood side by side with scurrilous "filler cartoons" which consistently and insidiously dehumanized ethnic immigrants, racial minorities, and the "filthy, besotted idler" Indians. The elite imagery of toga-clad Solons coexisted in time and space with the rawest denigration of immigrant people, as might be currently understood if an uplifting Masterpiece Theatre episode were followed by Ricki Lake on modern "trash TV." Although Fischer does not pursue the front door-back door imagery into the twentieth century, he has wrestled uneasily with the power of images for good or evil in a democratic society, and the alert reader will inevitably be drawn into thinking about the kinship between the big nineteenth century weeklies and sublime-and-tawdry modern media.

Fischer advances the argument of Thomas C. Leonard (*The Power of*

Draper Hill's *Words to Live By* published 17 February 1987 in the *Detroit News*.


WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"He's making the price of running against him so high, no one will try it."
—June Roselle
CIVIC CENTER DIRECTOR
"...Frankly, I don't give a damn what the newspapers and TV say."
—Mayor Young
FOREVER YOUNG
APOLOGIES TO Thomas Nast.

the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting) that Nast's development and synthesis of Boss Tweed as the embodiment of New York City's Tammany Hall corruption "marked no less than the genesis of 'visual thinking about political power' in American journalism." (7) Yet in doing so, Fischer argues, Nast may have been driven less by an insightful brilliance than by plodding trial and error, in addition to an understandable desire to enhance his own value by adding the "impact of visual imagery to the anti-Tammany propaganda of patron Fletcher Harper," publisher of *Harper's Weekly*. (8) Fischer further suggests that religious demagoguery played a role in the enhancement of Nast's (and his employers') career and finances. The virulent and exuberantly effective anti-Catholic cartoons drawn by Nast (who according to Fischer was an erstwhile Catholic himself) likely contain a large element of "pandering to the baser prejudices" of Nast's certifiably anti-Catholic employers. As Nast drew, *Harper*'s writers fulminated against evils such as Pius IX's doctrine of papal infallibility, the "constant aim of the extreme section of the Romish Church [to destroy our free schools]," and the corruption of "priest-ridden" New York in which "the Romish church grasps its full share of the spoil."

In a sidelight on nineteenth century cartooning distortion as a result of political illiteracy among both native-born and immigrant cartoonists, Fischer turns to the example of an obscure figure named William A. Peffer. He was a populist senator from Kansas between 1891-1897. Cartoonists loved him not because he had anything special to say, but because he was a gaunt figure with a long beard and picturesque rural dress, and eminently suited to caricature. Thus from laziness, argues Fischer, artists who "drifted into the trade because they could draw, not because they were driven by . . . political curiosity," (46) made this undistinguished Senator into the color cartoon symbol of the People's party through the pages of *Puck* and *Judge*. The notion resonates with insight, and surely has relevance to the work of current practitioners as well as historical ones.

Two powerful symbolic images which have evolved over more than a century of political cartooning are those of Auguste Bartholdi's *Liberty Enlightening the World*, and the personification of the martyred Abraham Lincoln. In general Miss Liberty's path proceeded "from oddity to icon," while Lincoln's course appears to have been the reverse. Chapters on these images in myriad applications, in addition to the equally enduring characters of Boss Tweed and Dick Nixon, provide a coda to the development of the modern era of political cartooning. This is now a newspaper medium with enough of its own history that a cartoonist can employ a complex metaphor simulta-

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neously invoking the visual imagery of Nast and "moneybags" Tweed with the words of Nixon ("I am not a crook") in reference to a local politician, and know he will be understood.

This is an ambitious book, and in many ways an unfinished book, because it is so wide-ranging and yet unresolved. The author approaches the material from the perspectives of sociology, biography, and visual analysis, and prefers to raise questions rather than prescribe answers. Fischer's contributions include a keen sensitivity to the elements of human nature that functioned as surely in the journalism of the nineteenth century as in the twentieth, a healthy skepticism, and a blessed absence of didacticism. ●

Fischer, Roger A. *Them Damned Pictures: Explorations in American Political Cartoon Art.* Archon Books. 1996. 268p. index. bibl. notes. ISBN 0-208-02298-8 hbk. $37.50

Erratum

In the interest of creating as accurate a record as possible, *Inks* will correct errors of fact in previous issues as soon after the initial publication of the errors as possible. Moreover, the editor encourages readers and scholars who discover errors to point them out, supplying the correct information and citing their sources.

In Volume 3, number 2 (May 1996) an illustration on page 37, "The Wearing of the Grin," *Life*, 17 March 1927, was mistakenly credited to Frank De Sales Casey. This work is by Fred G. Cooper.

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Guidelines for Authors

INKS: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies seeks to be the premier journal in its field. It publishes lively articles about printed cartoon art and serves as a forum for new concepts and debate. Meticulous research and informative writing are required.

Except with prior arrangement, the maximum length for a submission is twenty double-spaced typed pages, excluding notes and illustrations. Initial submissions must be accompanied by photocopies of the illustrations the author proposes to use. Captions should be typed directly on the photocopies at the bottom of the pages. In no instance should original artwork be submitted.

Authors must send three copies of typescripts submitted for publication as articles. All article submissions are refereed by at least two reviewers in addition to the editor. The reviewers' comments will be forwarded to the author, but typescripts will not normally be returned.

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Basic endnote style is as follows:

1. Rebecca Zurier, *Art for The Masses* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 89. [Note that no abbreviation precedes the page numbers.]

2. Alice Sheppard, "There Were Ladies Present: American Women Cartoonists and Comic Artists in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of American Culture* 7(Fall 1984): 38-48.

3. Bill Blackbeard and Martin WIlliams, eds. *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 12.

4. George Newton Gordon, "Can Children Corrupt Our Comics?" in *The Funnies: An American Idiom* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 158-166.

5. Edwin McDowell, "America Is Taking Comic Books Seriously," *New York Times*, 31 July 1988, E8.

Style for second references:

1. Zurier, *Art for the Masses*, 66.

2. Sheppard, "There Were Ladies Present," 44.

3. Gordon, "Can Children Corrupt Our Comics?" 164.

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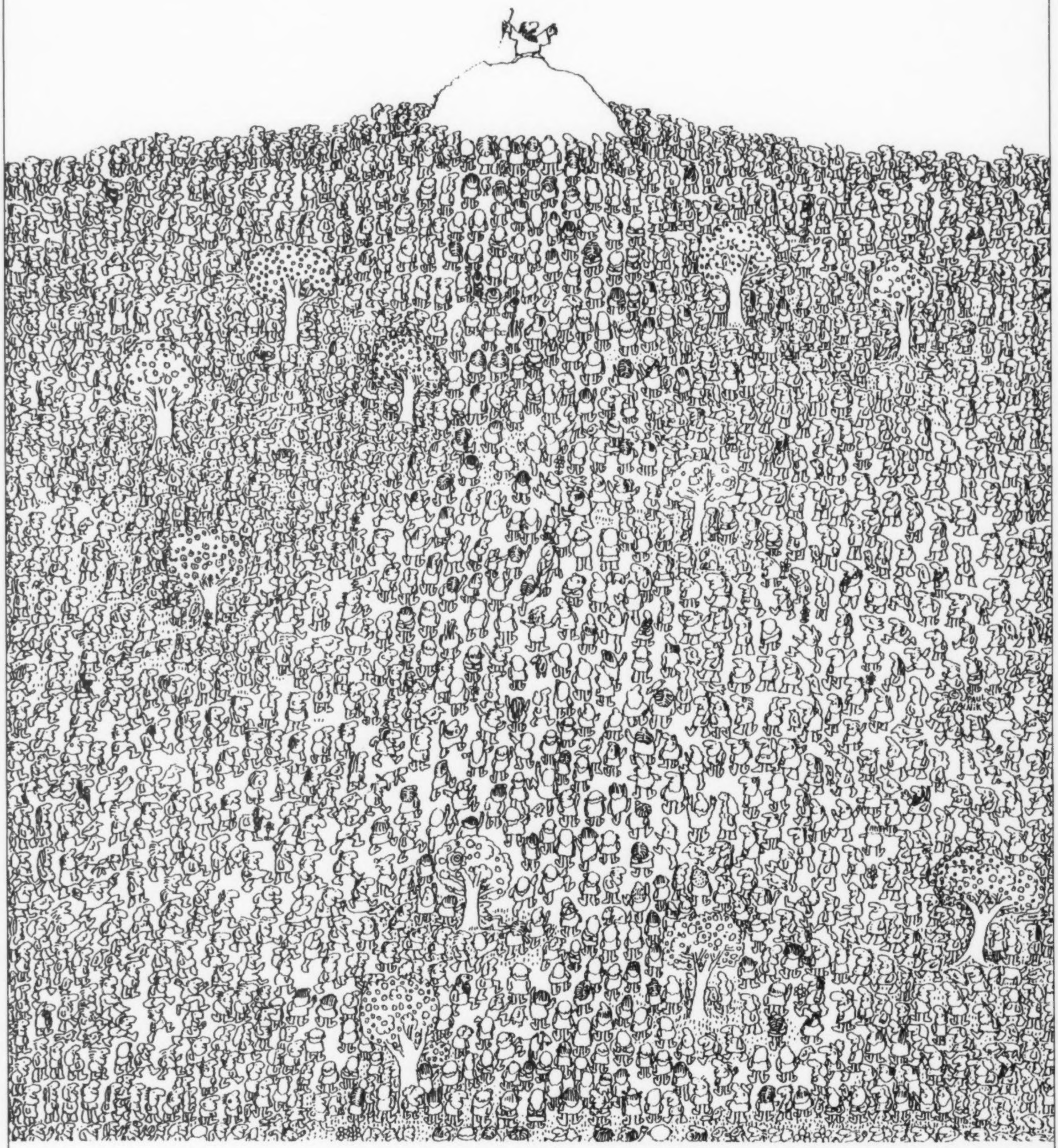

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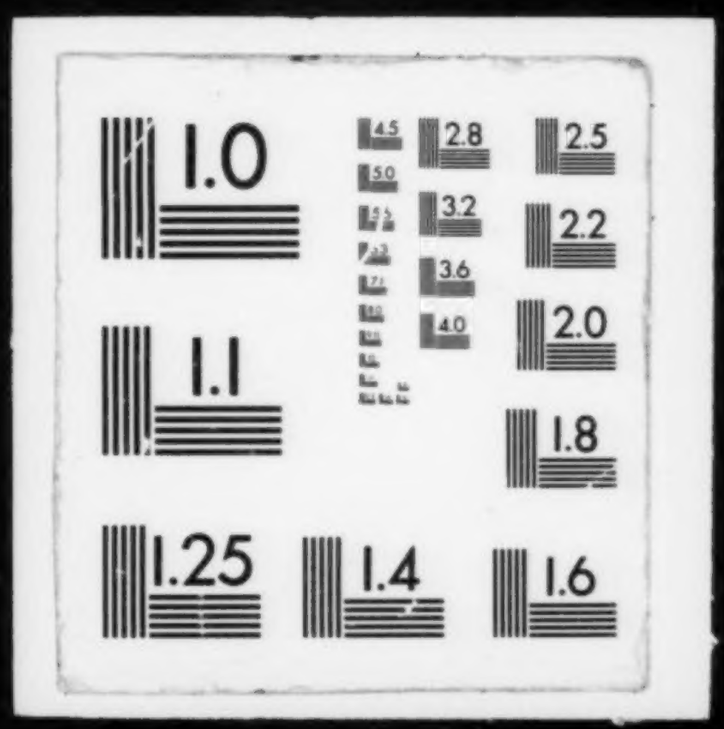

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